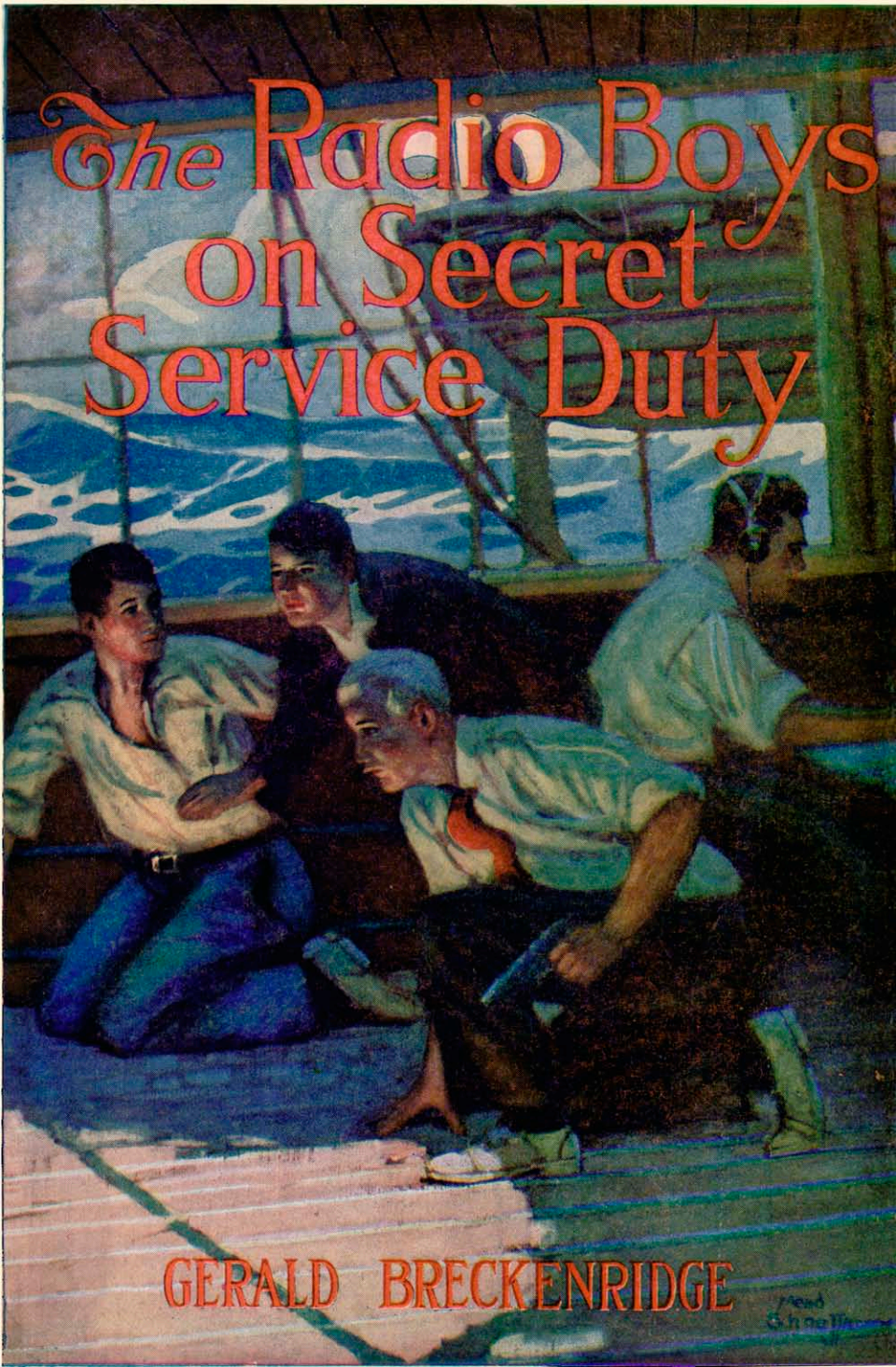
The Radio Boys on Secret Service Duty



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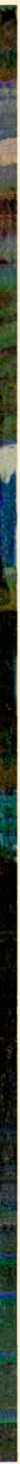

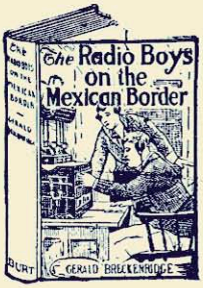

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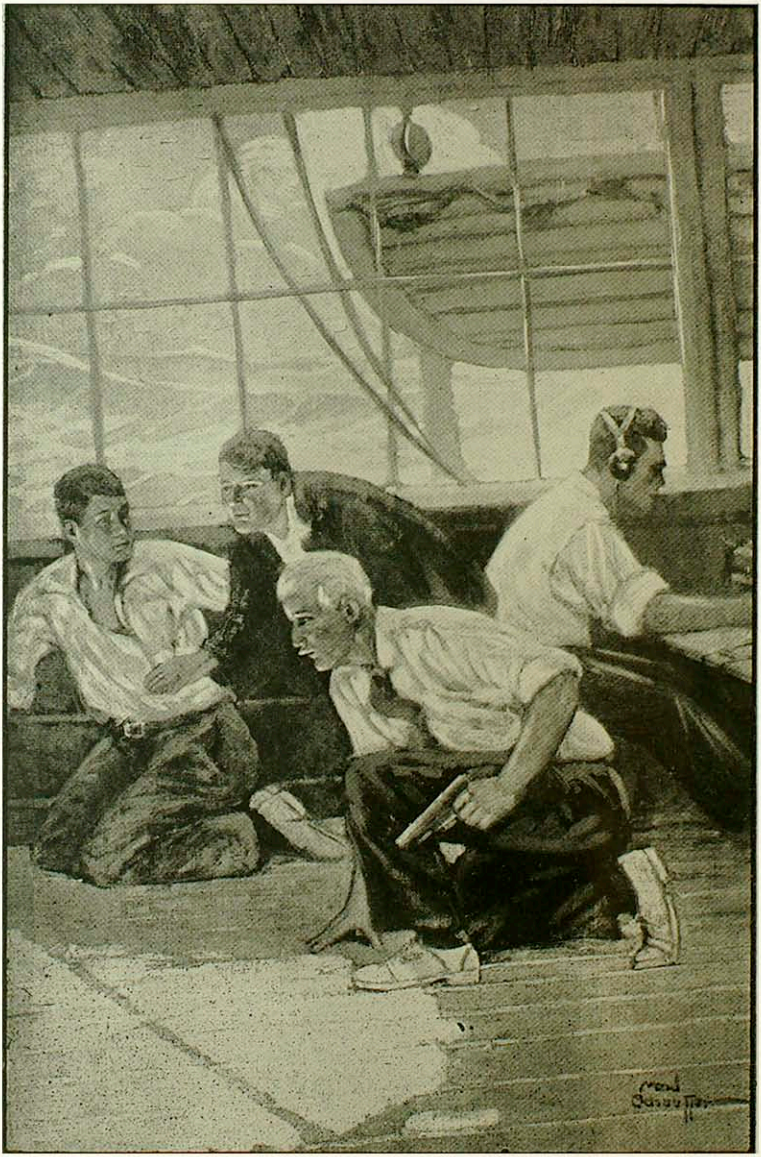
The Radio Boys
On Secret Service Duty

GERALD BRECKENRIDGE

To John Jr
From Mother
Xmas 1929

The Radio Boys On Secret Service Duty



They were all crouched low to avoid being seen from the deck.

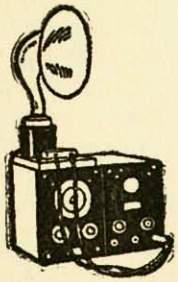
(*The Radio Boys on Secret Service Duty*) *Page 117*

THE RADIO BOYS ON SECRET SERVICE DUTY

By GERALD BRECKENRIDGE

AUTHOR OF

"The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border," "The Radio Boys with the Revenue Guards," "The Radio Boys' Search for the Inca's Treasure," "The Radio Boys Rescue the Lost Alaska Expedition."



FRONTISPIECE

A. L. BURT COMPANY
Publishers New York

THE RADIO BOYS SERIES

A Series of Stories for Boys of All Ages

By GERALD BRECKENRIDGE

The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border
The Radio Boys on Secret Service Duty
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THE RADIO BOYS ON SECRET SERVICE DUTY

Made in "U. S. A."

CHAPTER I

FRANK "LISTENS IN"

"EXCUSE me for butting in, stranger," said a pleasant voice at the door of the Pullman stateroom, "but I heard you talkin' to these boys about the old mining camps in these California mountains. It's kind of tiresome with nobody to talk to, ridin' all day. Mind if I come in? Mebbe I can tell you some things interesting to easterners. I'm an old-timer here."

"Come right in," said Mr. Temple, rising and extending his hand. "My name's Temple, George Temple. And this is my son, Bob, and his chums, Jack Hampton and Frank Merrick."

"My name's Harlan, Ed Harlan," said the other, advancing. "I was born and raised in the mountains. My dad was a forty-niner from Tennessee."

He was a slim middle-aged man in black, with a black sombrero worn at a rakish angle.

Those who have read *The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border* are familiar with Mr. Temple and

the three chums. Living in country homes on the far end of Long Island, they had been drawn by a web of circumstances into international intrigue on the Mexican Border. Jack's father, representative of a syndicate of independent oil operators, had been kidnapped by Mexican rebels seeking to embroil the government with that of the United States. The boys had gone into Mexico and rescued him. Now Mr. Temple, a New York importer, was making a business trip to San Francisco and taking them with him.

Radio had played no unimportant part in their adventures. In fact, it had been instrumental in bringing them to a successful conclusion. It was Mr. Hampton, a scientific man enthusiastic over the development of radio telephony long before the craze swept the country, who had introduced the boys to it. He was licensed by the government to build a transmission station on his Long Island estate and use an 1,800-metre wave length for trans-oceanic experiment. When he went to the Southwestern oil fields, he also erected a station there, using the same wave length previously assigned him.

These two stations not only provided exceptional opportunities for the boys to learn the intricacies of radio telephony but also provided a method of helping defeat the ends sought by the Mexican rebels. In

their invasion of Mexico, moreover, the boys found several radio stations which were links in a chain that had been built by German spies operating in Mexico against the United States during the World War.

Frank and Bob also owned an all-metal airplane outfitted with radio, which had played a leading role in their Mexican border adventure. Frank was an orphan living with the Temples. Bob's mother was dead. The two estates of Mr. Hampton and Mr. Temple adjoined. Jack, the oldest of the trio, was 19, while Frank and Bob were a year younger, Frank being the youngest of the three. All attended Harrington Hall Military Academy, and were on their summer vacation when the Mexican border adventures immediately preceding these about to be recorded occurred.

On their way to San Francisco the party had gone by a circuitous route through Denver in order to visit the Mile High City of the Rockies. They were now on the last day of their journey and passing through the Sierras down the famous Feather River Canyon.

Accompanied by Mr. Harlan the group made its way to the observation platform on the rear of the Flyer. Hour after hour they sat there while the scenery about them gradually changed its character with the passing of the afternoon, the mountains giving way to foothills and seeming to recede farther

and farther to the rear. In reality, of course, the train was drawing away from them and descending into the lower ranges.

Harlan was a pleasant companion, and from him the boys learned more intimate history of California than they ever had been able to obtain from text-books. He told them of the days of '49 and the treasure seekers; how the latter had come overland by wagon trails in some cases, fighting Indians and starvation, leaving many in nameless graves by the wayside during the long trek across the desert and through the mountains; how, in other cases, the adventurers had sailed in windjammers, or ships propelled by sails alone and without engine power, spending as much as a year in the long trip from the eastern seaboard clear around South America and Cape Horn, although the majority had sailed merely to the Isthmus of Panama and crossing by horse-back or in wagons, had taken ship on the other side for San Francisco.

"Those were the days," said Harlan. "Of course, I didn't experience them personally, for I'm just a young man now. But my father was a forty-niner, came out from Tennessee. And the stories he used to tell of San Francisco in the early days made me mad because I hadn't lived there then.

"She was just a crazy little town of crazy little

wooden shacks, built any whichway over the hills, but the people that built her were the hardy spirits of all the world and the breath of romance must have been in the very air."

At a question from Frank, who, like his chums, was intensely interested in these stories of early California, Mr. Harlan launched into a description of the Spanish Dons inhabiting the land before the invasion of the gold seekers.

Mexico, he recalled to the boys, used to own California. The best Spanish families lived there on grants of land from the King of Spain which had been passed down from generation to generation.

The estates were huge, and the Dons lived on them pretty much absolute masters of their Indians and peons. It was an easy, gracious sort of existence, without hurry, without the bustle and haste introduced later by the Americans with their multifarious machinery. If the Don stirred abroad, he rode a mount jingling with fanciful and costly trappings, and he himself dressed like a cavalier of old. At night his hacienda would resound to music while the gentry from miles around danced and their carriages and horses filled his ample stables and stood under the drooping pepper trees.

Then came the gold seekers scarring the hills of the northern part of the state with their mines.

And in their wake came the farmers and ranchers with their new-fangled farm machinery. They took the rich valleys where the countless herds of the Dons had roamed in the past, and began making that marvelous soil produce crops of wheat. The old order with its lazy ways could not survive before the new day with its energy and modern business methods. The Dons went to the wall.

"To-day," said Harlan, in his drawling southern voice, "there are some of their descendants left. But they cut little figure in the present-day California."

Jack spoke up with unexpected heat.

"Well, I think it's a shame," he said. "I know that we are supposed to believe our own ways of living are the best, but I, for one, wish California had stayed the way it was."

Bob leaned toward Frank and assumed a confidential tone.

"He's thinking of Senorita Rafaela," he said.

She was the daughter of Don Fernandez y Calomares, a wealthy Mexican of pure Castilian descent living in a palace in northern Mexico. The Don was leader of the Mexican rebels who, as related in *The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border,* had captured Mr. Hampton. Jack and Bob in the latter's airplane had gone to the rescue, and the young Spanish girl had given them valuable aid.

At Bob's words, which although low spoken were intended to reach Jack's ear, the latter flushed. Then he reached over and pulling Bob's cap down over his eyes started to shake him good-naturedly. In a moment all three boys were entangled. Mr. Temple laughed and explained the situation to Mr. Harlan. The two men watched the chums amusedly, until a sudden lurch as the train whirled around a sharp curve threatened to send Jack flying overboard.

With a quick movement Mr. Harlan seized Jack by the coat and pulled him back to safety.

"That was a close call," said Mr. Temple gravely. "You boys ought to be more careful."

At Oroville, which he explained was in the heart of the apple country, Mr. Harlan left the party. All were sorry to bid him farewell, for he had been a jolly and informative companion. Dinner was served, and the party returned to the club car where Mr. Temple settled down with his cigar and a newspaper. Presently the chums grew tired of reading, and once more sauntered out to the observation platform.

They would not sleep aboard the train again as they would reach their destination near midnight. For a time they gossiped in low voices, so as not to disturb two men whispering together on the other side of the platform. All three sat in silence, slumped

down in their chairs and at first staring out at the landscape bathed in magical moonlight. Gradually Jack and Bob yielded to the soporific influences of their surroundings, with the car wheels beating a monotonous and sleep-inducing lullaby.

Presently the two men who had been whispering raised their voices slightly in argument. Then one ceased abruptly, cast a keen glance toward the boys, said a word or two in a low voice to his companion, and they arose and entered the car. Frank, who like his companions had been sitting with his cap pulled down over his eyes, had not been asleep, however, and as the others left the platform he shook Jack and Bob into wakefulness.

"Did you hear that?" he demanded excitedly.

His two chums rubbed their eyes, and looked puzzled.

"Hear what?" asked Jack.

"What those fellows said."

"What fellows?" asked Bob.

"Why, those two men who were out here," Frank said impatiently. "I believe you were actually asleep."

"Guess I was," said Bob, yawning. "But what was it they said? And were they talking to you?"

"They were whispering to each other," said Frank. "I didn't mean to listen. But they raised their voices,

and I overheard. Then one of them looked our way—to see if we heard, I suppose—and they got up and left."

"Well, what was it?" demanded Jack.

"Shh," said Frank, nervously. "The door's open and that man—the one that got suspicious of us—is staring out at us. Listen," he whispered, "I'm going in to talk to Uncle George. You fellows stretch and yawn presently and get up and go to our stateroom. Then pretty soon I'll bring Uncle George in, and we can shut the door and I'll tell you."

CHAPTER II

LOOSE ENDS OF A PLOT

"Now, what is it, Frank?" asked Mr. Temple, when he and the three chums were all gathered in their staterooms with the door locked behind them. "What's all this mystery?"

"Yes, what is it you overheard out there on the observation platform?" demanded Jack. "You certainly seem excited enough. What's it all about?"

"Spoiled my nap," grumbled big Bob. "It better be good or they won't be able to find you."

And picking up a pillow he started to belabor his chum with it. Frank laughed and warded him off.

"Take him away," he said. "He's a wild man. How can I talk if he smothers me?"

"Sit down, Bob," Mr. Temple commanded his son. Bob sank back on the couch grumbling.

"Uncle George," said Frank, assuming a serious manner and lowering his voice, "I know you are puzzled by my request for you to come back here. But I didn't dare explain out there in the club car. Those men were sitting too close, and I believe they

were watching me. One was, at least. You see, while Jack and Bob were snoozing out on the observation platform, I was awake. And I overheard just enough of the conversation between those two men to understand there was a big plot afoot."

"Plot?" queried Mr. Temple. "What plot? What are you talking about? Plot against whom?"

"Against the United States," said Frank. "I tell you I couldn't hear much. Only a few words here and there reached me. But I gathered there was a plot afoot to smuggle a large number of Chinese coolies into the country, and that these men had a hand in it."

Mr. Temple leaned forward.

"What's that?" he said.

"Yes, sir," answered Frank, stoutly. "That's what they said. I can't repeat the exact words. There were only snatches here and there that reached me. But my mind kept following the thought between the words. Oh, you know how it is."

Mr. Temple nodded. He had a great respect for Frank's intelligence. Often before he had been witness to the lad's almost uncanny ability to guess another's thoughts.

"But just what was said, Frank?" he asked. "Anything that you could hear definitely?"

"Yes," said Frank, "there was. There was some-

thing about Ensenada. Isn't that in Mexico, on the seacoast somewhere?"

"Peninsula of Lower California, Mexican territory," said Jack. "Go on."

"And there was something, too, about Chinese coolies and motor boats and night running and——" Frank paused for dramatic effect. He obtained it.

"And what?" demanded big Bob.

"And radio," added Frank, triumphantly. "That was when I heard best. One of the two men was explaining something to the other, and he became excited and raised his voice. He said: 'With Handby in the revenue force keeping us in touch, we'll be fixed right. We've got the radio station at the cove completed, and can guide the coolie boats past every danger."

"Radio?" cried Jack. "Whew. These fellows must be well organized."

"And a spy in the revenue forces, too," commented Bob. "You certainly did have your ears open, Frank."

Frank turned to the older man.

"So there you are, Uncle George," said he. "That's what I heard. Then, after one of them said that about the radio station and this man Handby, in the revenue forces—I'm sure the name was Handby—he suddenly realized they had raised their voices and

might have been overheard. So they left the platform. But I'm sure he was suspicious of me, although we all did seem to be snoozing. Now what had we better do?"

"This is a serious matter, boys," said Mr. Temple. "Do you know anything about the smuggling traffic in Chinese coolies?"

"I know we have some kind of law barring them from entrance into the country," said Jack. "But I'm hazy about it."

Frank and Bob nodded agreement.

"Well," said Mr. Temple, "in the days when this country of California was being settled by pioneers and immigrants, not only from the eastern part of our country but from foreign lands, too, the white people grew alarmed at the arrival of large numbers of Chinese laborers or coolies, as they are called.

"These people had utterly different standards of life. Due to the crowded conditions in their country, for China you will recall has about one-quarter of the entire population of the world, the Chinese coolie learns to exist on less food than the white man and to dress more cheaply, too.

"Accordingly the Chinaman works for less than the white laborer or the Negro, even. Consequently, the early-day Californians began to worry at the

influx of coolies, fearing they would cheapen living conditions and wages. Their legislators made such a fuss that the government at Washington made a treaty with China barring Chinese coolies from the country."

"But we have a good many Chinamen here, Father," big Bob protested.

"Oh, yes," said his father, "the treaty created exempt classes. That is, Chinamen who are merchants, professional men, students or travelers are admitted."

"How long ago was that, Uncle George?" asked Frank.

"During President Arthur's administration," was the reply. The treaty was signed at Washington in 1881 and ratified at Pekin a short time later."

"And have there been no Chinese coolies admitted since then?" asked Jack.

"Not officially," replied Mr. Temple. "During the World War some labor battalions of Chinese coolies, under contract to do work behind the lines in France, passed through the country, but they were guarded to prevent escape.

"However, as I understand it, there has been a steady traffic along our borders in the smuggling of Chinese coolies into the country. This is especially true along the Pacific Coast, although smuggling

rings have been discovered in operation along the Mexican and Canadian borders in the past, and only a few months ago a cargo of Chinese coolies was smuggled into New York harbor.

"The reason for wanting them, of course, is that they provide cheap labor, the cheapest, in fact. There are men and syndicates in California, operating ranches, fruit and truck farms, who will pay well to have a batch of coolie laborers delivered to them, and no questions asked. Consequently, smuggling rings come into being for the purpose of supplying this illicit demand."

"Well, what shall we do about this information, Uncle George?" said Frank. "Don't you think we ought to tell the authorities?"

"I certainly do," said Mr. Temple. "When we reach San Francisco, I shall lay this matter before the Secret Service the first thing to-morrow, and you will have to go along to tell them what you overheard."

"Meanwhile," commented Jack, "these two fellows would escape."

"Well, we can't help that," decided Mr. Temple. "We are not officers of the law, and can't arrest them. As for shadowing them, to see where they go on reaching San Francisco, for I suppose that's their destination, that is out of the question, too.

In the first place, they already have a suspicion that Frank overheard them, and accordingly they would be on watch. In the second place, we all will be ready for a good night's rest when we arrive. Anyhow, I imagine that from what Frank overheard the revenue officers will get a good enough clue to enable them to run down this gang."

"You mean," questioned Frank, "that knowing this man Handby is a spy, they can watch him and learn who are his confederates?"

"Something like that," said Mr. Temple.

After that the conversation became desultory. Mr. Temple lay outstretched on the couch with cigar and newspaper. The boys wandered out again into the club car, and beyond to the observation platform. It was growing late, and they were nearing Oakland. The transcontinental railroad lines end at that city on San Francisco Bay, and the trip to the metropolis is completed by ferry—a short run of twenty minutes.

"I can sniff the salt water," said Jack. "Smell it. We must be getting close to the Bay."

All three chums grew exhilarated at the prospect of soon reaching the world-famous city, which is the Gateway to the Pacific and is unlike any other city in America, with the Latin-like gayety of its populace, its 30,000 Chinamen forming a city of their

own within the larger city, and its waterfront crowded with traffic of the Orient—spicy and mysterious.

"I don't see those fellows," whispered Frank to his chums, surveying the figures in the club car behind them. "Maybe they left the train."

But at that very moment, the coolie smuggler who had suspected Frank of overhearing him was tipping the porter to learn to what hotel the boys and Mr. Temple had ordered their baggage sent.

CHAPTER III

THE MAN OF MYSTERY AGAIN

"WELL, boys," said Mr. Temple at breakfast next morning. "I'm going to be busy to-day talking business with my Pacific Coast representatives. First of all, however, Frank and I shall have to go and lay before the government people this information as to what he overheard. I suppose, Bob, that you and Jack want to go along."

"Righto, Father," said Bob.

They sat at table in the Palace Hotel on Market Street in San Francisco. This is one of the most famous hostelries in the world. Lotta's Fountain is on Market Street outside. Nearby is the intersection of Market, Geary and Kearney Streets—the busiest spot in all the great city. The offices of the big newspapers are adjacent. The hotel itself has housed famous men and women from all parts of the world, has been the scene of great municipal balls and other festivities, and in addition is the Mecca for which head all the prospectors of the gold coun-

try and the Yukon when they strike it rich, as they say.

Mr. Temple's business in the city was to consult with the western representative of the big exporting and importing firm of which he was the head. Frank's father had been his partner, and on his death had made Mr. Temple his son's guardian and administrator of his estate.

"We'll stay a week, if all goes well," said Mr. Temple. "Of course, if my business engagements take up too much of my time we might stay a day or two longer, as there are some points of interest I intend to visit while here. I've been in San Francisco before, but, for one thing, I've never gone to the top of Mt. Tamalpais, across the Bay in the Marin County peninsula. I want to make that trip. I suppose," he added, with a smile, "you won't object if I am forced to stay more than a week."

"Oh, yes," said Jack laughing, "we'll be awfully put out. We don't want to see a thing."

Suddenly Frank pushed back his chair and with an incoherent cry started to dart away. Bob seized him by the coat. Frank writhed in his grasp and attempted to twist free. He was highly excited.

"Hold on," said Bob. "What's the matter?"

Then Frank managed to obtain sufficent control of his voice to explain.

"Let me go," he demanded. "I saw that man who was on the train—the fellow who was explaining the smuggling plot."

"Where, where?" demanded Bob, also gaining his feet.

"He was breakfasting over there," said Frank, pointing to a table near the exit. "I caught just a glimpse of him. I think he was watching us. Come on."

Turning, he darted off with Bob at his heels.

"Don't leave the hotel," called Mr. Temple, sharply. People are watching us."

"Excuse me," said Jack, who had stood undecided whether to follow his chums. "I'll be right back."

And he, too, walked rapidly away.

With a sigh, Mr. Temple picked up his morning paper. But he was unable to concentrate on his reading. His eyes wandered anxiously toward the door despite himself. In a few minutes, however, his anxiety was relieved. He saw the forms of the three boys appear. From their expressions, he gathered that they had been unsuccessful.

"No use," said Frank. "He had disappeared."

"There are three doorways to as many streets," explained Jack, sinking into his chair. "Each of us went a different way, but we couldn't see him."

"Maybe he's a guest here," said Bob, "and went to his room."

"Good idea," said Frank. "Why didn't I think of that before? I'll just go and describe him to the room clerk and see if he's here, and maybe I can learn his name."

He would have gone at once, but Mr. Temple restrained him.

"Finish your breakfast first, Frank," said he. "You have barely touched your eggs and bacon. If the man is a guest here, you can get the information just as well a half hour from now."

The boys finished breakfast in record time. Mr. Temple sighed.

"You fellows are in such a hurry," said he. "If you are going to lead me the wild chase here that you did in New Mexico I'll wish I had never brought you. Here I go and plan a little sightseeing trip, and the first thing you do before ever arriving at San Francisco is to become involved in a plot. It won't do, you know."

Nevertheless, he got to his feet, signed the breakfast check and followed the boys toward the clerk's desk.

"No," said the latter, after Frank had described minutely the mysterious stranger. "I am quite sure I was not on duty last night when the Flyer came

in, but I was talking to the night clerk when the arrivals registered. I remember your faces well, for instance. I am quite sure I would have noted such a man as you describe if he had been among the number."

Disappointed, Frank turned away.

"So much for that," he said to his friends. "But, do you know? I wonder if that fellow happened to be in the breakfast room by accident, or whether he was watching us?"

"Watching us?" said Bob. "Oh, you've got this plot stuff on the brain, old thing. Why would he be watching us?"

"To see whether we went to the authorities," said Frank. "If he saw us go to the authorities, he would be pretty certain we had overheard enough of his conversation out on the observation platform last night to make us suspicious, at least."

Mr. Temple was struck with the force of Frank's reasoning.

"Look here," he said, to the three chums. "Frank is right. If there is a big plot afoot, and this fellow suspects us of having gained some knowledge of it, he probably would do just as Frank says."

"Suppose you called up the Secret Service men, Mr. Temple," suggested Jack, "and asked one of

them to call on you here at the hotel? Wouldn't that be better than to go to them?"

"Very good, Jack," approved the older man. "A government agent could make his way direct to our suite without arousing suspicion if he takes precautions, while, if Frank is correct and we are being shadowed, we could not stir out of the hotel without being followed. Do you boys stay here and keep your eyes open, while I go to our rooms and telephone. If you see any more of this fellow, call me. If not, come up in half an hour. By then probably a government man will have arrived."

The half-hour passed quickly for the boys who sat in the lobby, intensely interested in the life of the big hotel going on around them, and especially in the Oriental men-servants in their gorgeous native costumes flitting in and out on noiseless soft-soled slippers. They saw no sign of the man Frank believed was shadowing them and, at the end of the allotted period of time, took the elevator to their third-floor suite overlooking Market Street.

Barely had they entered the sitting room than there came a low knock on the door, repeated three times, and Mr. Temple sprang to open it.

"There's the government agent," he said. "That's the signal he said he would give."

As he opened the door, an alert, slim man of 30

stepped inside and closed the door quickly behind him.

"Pardon my abruptness," he said, in a low voice. "Are you Mr. Temple?"

"I am."

"And I am Inspector Burton," said the other, flipping back the right lapel of his coat and displaying a small gold shield. "You wanted to see me?"

"I did," said Mr. Temple. "Won't you sit down?"

Inspector Burton took off his hat and accepted the proffered chair. He looked inquiringly at the boys. Mr. Temple introduced them.

"Now," said Mr. Temple, "you probably were somewhat mystified by my message. I did not want to say anything over the telephone about the nature of the business on which we wanted to see you. Yet I did want you to come here without being seen. That was why I asked you to take precautions."

The other nodded.

"In our business," he said, "we receive many strange calls. So I was not much surprised. I may as well tell you, however, that the clerk, who can be trusted, knows that I am here."

He shot a searching glance at his hosts.

Mr. Temple nodded.

"I see," he said. "We might have been enemies

trying to lure you into a trap. That was a wise precaution on your part. But," he added, leaning forward, "we are not enemies; merely good citizens who have come into possession of certain information which we believe you ought to have."

"Wait a minute," said Inspector Burton, in a low voice, and leaping to his feet, he gained the door in two strides, threw it open, peered out, then disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

ENTER INSPECTOR BURTON

WHILE the others still sat where he had left them, regarding each other in speechless surprise, Inspector Burton returned, closed and locked the door, and resumed his chair as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred.

"Thought I heard someone listening outside the door," he explained. "When I opened it there was nobody in sight. Your room is only two doors from an angle in the hall. So I ran to the turning and looked along the corridor, but it was empty."

"Now, what is it?" he asked.

Mr. Temple explained, and when he had concluded, Frank once more rehearsed the scraps of conversation which he had overheard the two low-voiced men drop on the observation platform of their train the previous night.

Inspector Burton's eyes blazed with satisfaction. He pounded one clenched hand into the palm of the other, repeating the gesture several times.

"Good," said he. "Good."

Turning to Frank he commanded:

"Describe these men for me."

Frank complied. At the description of the man who had scrutinized Frank on the train and whom Frank believed he had seen again at breakfast, Inspector Burton uttered an exclamation.

"Do you know him?" asked Frank, eagerly.

"Indeed I do," said Inspector Burton. "I believe I saw him in the lobby downstairs, although he did not see me as far as I could tell. He was lurking behind a pillar."

"Who is he?"

"He's a man of many aliases. Folwell will do as well as any other. 'Black George' is his name in the underworld, because of his swarthy complexion and raven black hair. He's the leader of a powerful gang of underworld characters, a gang with ramifications in many cities not only here but on the China Coast, too. He's been responsible for many deviltries on the Pacific Coast for years, but we have never been able to lay anything definite at his door. It'll be a feather in the cap of any man who can get the goods on 'Black George'."

Frank was excited, and showed it. His chums were, too. Mr. Temple could not restrain an exclamation.

"Then what this young man overheard will be of some value to you?" he demanded.

"Value?" repeated Inspector Burton. "It will, indeed. Lately the smuggling of Chinese coolies into the country has enormously increased. We know they are coming in but we cannot stop them. We suspected, of course, that there was a leak somewhere in our forces. We have managed to stop the smuggling across the border on land pretty well. But all our efforts to put a stop to bringing in of Chinese by water have been unavailing. We have a fleet of fast revenue cutters and sub chasers operating off the coast of Southern California, but somehow the coolie smugglers coming up from Mexico manage to elude us in the night and land their human cargo in some unlocated cove whence, undoubtedly, they are whisked inland by waiting motor cars and hidden."

"I should think you could patrol the whole coast, if necessary, and locate the rendezvous," said Jack.

Inspector Burton shook his head with a wry smile.

"My young friend," said he, "if you knew more about the ways of government, you would think differently. We have to do a tremendous amount of work on small appropriations and with a limited force. Ours is not a spectacular branch of the service, and the gentlemen in Congress see no occasion to spend money on us. They prefer to spend it

where it will show. Moreover, now that the World War has increased the national debt, they are shouting for economy. Instead of giving us more men and money, the men who hold the purse strings are cutting us down."

Mr. Temple nodded understandingly.

"But this tip about Handby," said Frank, returning to the first subject, "won't that help you?"

"It will, indeed," said Inspector Burton. "Handby is employed in Southern California, operating out of Los Angeles and San Diego. Just to show you how valuable I consider your information, I'll say that since sitting here I have made up my mind to make a trip immediately to the south myself. Handby shall be put under surveillance at once."

"Won't you arrest him and try to make him confess?" queried Jack.

"No. That would scare off the others. I'll watch Handby in hope that he will lead us to his associates, and thus we will be enabled to scoop in a number of the crooks and break up the smuggling ring."

"About this radio station in the cove?" said Frank. "You remember? I told you I overheard 'Black George' telling his companion the radio at the cove would keep in touch with the coolie boats?"

Inspector Burton nodded.

"That's important, of course," he said. "But as

I told you we haven't sufficient men to make a systematic search of the coast. We'll have to depend on Handby to betray the station to us."

"Not necessarily," interrupted Jack.

Inspector Burton glanced at him inquiringly.

"The government certainly has a powerful radio station or two out here on the Pacific Coast," said Jack. "Hasn't it?"

"Why, yes," answered Inspector Burton. "There's a big one right here in San Francisco. But, to tell you the truth, I've never paid much attention to radio."

"Well, Jack has," said Mr. Temple, smiling. "He and his father are radio fans. They have several big stations of their own under special government license, on Long Island and in New Mexico. Jack probably knows more about radio than about anything else."

"I don't know whether to take that as a compliment or a slap," laughed Jack.

"A compliment, my boy, a compliment," said Mr. Temple, patting him on the shoulder.

"Well," said Jack, "I'll confess I was caging a bit when I asked whether the government had stations out here. I know it has. You know, you fellows"—turning to his chums—"how dad and I have studied the history of radio development. I remember that

as far back as 1910 or 1912 the Federal Telegraph Company carried on radio experiments out here between stations at San Francisco, Stockton, Sacramento and Los Angeles."

"Is that so?" said Inspector Burton, regarding Jack with increased respect. "Well, what did you mean awhile ago when you intimated it wasn't necessary to trail Handby in order to locate the smuggling ring's radio plant."

"Can you obtain the use of the government radio stations?" countered Jack.

"Certainly."

"Well, then, to begin with, we can obtain the approximate location of the smugglers' radio. Of course, they will speak in code, and probably they will use a high wave length in order to avoid the confusion of any amateur sending stations cutting in. Let the government stations here and at Los Angeles tune until they pick up code. It is weak here and strong at Los Angeles, then the station sending code is nearer the latter city."

"Well, that won't help us much," said Inspector Burton, disappointedly. "We know, of course, that it is bound to be in the southern part of the state, probably even below Los Angeles, in order that the coolie boats can make their run from Mexico in one night."

"I see," said Jack, composedly. "But that wasn't the only thing I had in mind."

"What else?"

"Let an expert at solving codes listen in when once the code conversations are picked up. He can take down what he hears. The probability is he can work out a solution. To a genuine expert, as I understand it, there is no code that cannot be solved."

"But," objected Mr. Temple, "the code picked up and deciphered might be from some station like yours, Jack."

"In which case you mean it would be about legitimate business?" said Jack. "But the government will have licensed stations listed, and their codes on file. No, I believe it would be a good move to put a code expert at work at the Los Angeles station."

"So do I," said Inspector Burton, warmly. "I want to thank you. And I want to thank you, too," he added, turning to Frank. "Your information will undoubtedly prove to be of the very greatest value."

He rose.

"I shall have to go now," he said. "I suppose you all will be viewing the city and taking in the sights. I wish I could stay to show it to you. But that cannot be. What you have told me makes

it necessary for me to leave at once for the south. I shall arrange my affairs here and take the night train to Los Angeles. I may not see you again. But I know you will be interested in the outcome and"—turning to Mr. Temple—"if you give me your address I promise to let you know."

Mr. Temple took out a business card and handed it to the other. Then he accompanied him to the door.

"Good-bye," called the chums, in chorus. "Good luck."

"Well," said Bob, when his father returned, "that's that. Now, Dad, you will want to attend to your business affairs to-day. What do you suggest we do?"

"Hire a car," said his father, promptly, "and drive around the city. Be back here at five. Then we'll dress and have dinner in one of the city's famous restaurants. San Francisco is noted for its wonderful dining places. Afterward, we can all go to a theatre or just walk around and view the city at night."

CHAPTER V

THE SOUND DETECTOR

"WHERE to, first?" queried Frank. "I vote for the Cliff House and Seal Rocks. Here in the guide book it says 'the seals play sportively in the restless tide.' And Sutro Baths are nearby, too, I gather—the largest indoor salt water pool in the world."

All three chums stood on the Market Street sidewalk before the Palace Hotel. The hour was near eleven. The usual early morning fog which had hung over the city, as it does practically every day of the year, had been dissipated for an hour or more. The sky was cloudless and blue, the sunshine brilliant. A brisk breeze blew along the tremendously wide thoroughfare, which is the widest of all the great city streets of the land, so wide, in fact, that it accommodates four street car lines with the width of an ordinary street left over on each side between the outer tracks and the curbs.

"How delightfully cool and exhilarating!" commented big Bob, drawing in and expelling great

lungfuls of the crisp air. "I haven't felt so peppy in days."

"The guide book says that's the San Francisco climate," said Frank. "Cool, snappy days all the year round."

"Your car, sir," said a uniformed doorman to Jack.

They looked up to find a handsome limousine drawn to the curb. This was the car they had ordered for the day. The boys moved toward it.

"We ought to decide right now where we want to go," declared Frank.

Jack had an inspiration.

"I'll tell you what, fellows," he said. "Father gave me the name and address of a man who invented some new radio equipment, and advised me to look him up. Suppose we do that, first. Then we can go sightseeing. It just occurred to me. Wonder where that address is."

He began leafing over the pages of a small memorandum book.

"Here it is. Bender, Silas Bender. 1453 Mission Street. Let's ask the chauffeur how far away that is?"

After a little discussion, it developed the address given—on the first street paralleling Market to the south—lay on the route to Golden Gate Park,

the Cliff House and Seal Rocks, whither the boys wanted to go. Accordingly, all piled into the car and sped away.

Mr. Bender maintained a little equipment store supplying radio apparatus. The shop was empty of customers when the boys arrived, and, at the ringing of the bell on their entrance, a medium-sized man, brisk and alert, came from the rear room outfitted as workshop. His thinning hair was rumpled. He was in his shirt sleeves.

"What can I do for you, gentlemen?" he asked inquiringly.

Jack stepped forward.

"Are you Mr. Bender?"

"I am."

"Well, I'm Jack Hampton," said Jack, extending his hand. "Here's a note from my father. I believe you have met him."

"Mr. Hampton the engineer?"

Jack nodded.

"Say, I am glad to meet you," said Mr. Bender enthusiastically. "Yes. I know your father. When he was on the Coast some years ago on his way to Alaska I met him. He's enthusiastic about radio telephony. We had a number of very pleasant talks. I remember him very well. But here, I'm

keeping you standing. Won't you come back into my workshop and sit down. Bring your friends."

Jack accomplished the necessary introductions, and they followed Mr. Bender into the room in the rear.

For a time the boys were kept busy examining various radio appliances, which the energetic Mr. Bender kept thrusting at them. All the time he kept up a running fire of comment.

"Now this," he said, taking up a small device of unusual shape, "is a sound detector. The only similar device in the field so far is the radio compass, but it is clumsy and unreliable. With this device, however, I am quite certain I have solved the problem of locating the point of origin of any strange or unusual sounds in the air."

Jack gave an exclamation.

"What say?" asked Mr. Bender, turning toward him.

Jack could hardly conceal his impatience.

"How does it work?" he asked eagerly.

"Well, suppose we wanted to locate the point of origin of some strange message heard at the radio station out at Golden Gate Park. First, we would use a sound detector there, and find out along what line the strange sound came to the station. It might be up the coast or down, or east, southeast or

northeast. Suppose it came from down the coast, or south. Then, at a point southeast of this city, we would again apply the sound detector and again at a third point south of the second. When at all three stations, the strange sound was loudest, we would have three bearings upon the point of its origin. Where they intersected, the——"

"The smuggler's cove would be located," said Frank quick-tongued.

The next moment he was covered with confusion as Mr. Bender regarded him blankly. So intent had the inventor been upon the description of his device and the method of its operation that he was aware only of an interruption but did not realize the nature of it.

Jack and Bob glared at Frank.

"Eh?" said Mr. Bender. "What say?"

"I just said something about the point of origin being where the lines intersected," declared Frank, considering it wise to withhold the whole truth, inasmuch as the matter of the smugglers was not his to divulge.

"Yes, certainly," said Mr. Bender, abstractedly. "Yes, project imaginary lines from each station and where they intersect will be the station you are hunting."

Abruptly he put aside the sound detector as if, now

that he had explained its operation, it were of no more value.

"Here," he said, taking up a suitcase, and swinging it around, "is a radio receiving device that can be carried easily in this small suitcase. And here"—putting down the suitcase before the boys could examine it and taking up a finger ring from a workbench—"is the smallest receiving set I have yet devised. It is, as you see, in the shape of a ring and can be worn without the presence of the device being suspected."

"Mr. Bender," said Frank, "will you excuse my friends and me for a few moments while we step aside and have a little confab. I believe we will have a proposal to make that will interest you."

"I know what you mean," said Frank, as Mr. Bender withdrew, leaving them alone. "That sound detector, hey? If the Secret Service man had that he would be able to locate the smuggler's cove."

"That's it, exactly," said Jack. "Inspector Burton said he would not be leaving for Los Angeles until to-night. I believe we ought to get hold of him at once and tell him about this possibility."

"I'm with you," said Bob. "But we don't know how to reach him. Suppose I call Father at the office of his business representative, and ask him to get Inspector Burton."

"Good idea," said Jack. "I didn't know just how to work it. But if your father gets Inspector Burton to come up here, we will not be revealing anything to Mr. Burton, and the inspector can tell as much or little as he wants."

"Then I'll telephone father," said Bob. "I saw a telephone in the store when we came in. I suppose Mr. Bender will let me use it."

"And I'll explain as much as necessary to Mr. Bender," said Jack.

Accordingly, he called the inventor back to the workroom while Bob telephoned Mr. Temple, and explained they were inviting a man to come up and talk to him about the sound detector.

"I can't tell you any more than that now, Mr. Bender," said Jack. "But I promise you, of course, that your invention is not in any danger of being stolen. On the contrary, the man we have asked to come here may put you in the way of making your fortune."

CHAPTER VI

IN THE ENEMY'S TOILS

"Look here," said Mr. Temple, "you boys have done a fine stroke of business for the government to-day. Suppose you play a little to-night?"

They were finishing dinner at a famous restaurant. All about them were tables with gay little parties. The concealed orchestra was playing a popular air. Mr. Temple leaned back, sighed comfortably and lighted a cigar. The boys went on with their dessert.

"It was a good stroke of business, Dad, wasn't it?" said Bob. "Getting that old inventor with his sound detector at just the right moment, and catching Inspector Burton before he left for the south. With that invention, he ought to be able to locate the smugglers' radio station."

"Sh, Bob, not so loud," warned Frank. "Somebody might hear us."

All looked around furtively. They occupied a separate table, however, and there was none other near enough for its occupants to overhear their conversation.

"For my part," said Jack, "I'm sorry we aren't going to be in on the outcome of this business."

"Same here," said Frank. "Here we go and start the ball to rolling, and then have to drop out, without a chance to see where it rolls to."

"Hard luck," agreed Bob. "That's what it is."

Mr. Temple shook his head.

"I should think you would have had enough adventures on the Mexican border," he said, "to last you the rest of your lives. Yet here you are lamenting because you can't have more. Besides, this matter can be of no particular concern to you."

"Just the same," said Frank, "it is. We have a personal interest in the matter. We started it by overhearing the plotters. Then we found this inventor with his sound detector that probably will enable the Serect Service to locate the smugglers' radio plant and secret cove. Now we are calmly shouldered out of the way. It's hard luck, as Bob says."

Mr. Temple smiled tolerantly.

"You can't expect me to sympathize with you very much," he said. "Well, now, which shall it be? The theatre or a prowl around Chinatown?"

Chinatown? In a moment the pessimism of the boys vanished. They were all smiles.

"Chinatown by all means," said Jack, emphatically.

"Righto," agreed Bob.

"With its opium dens and hatchet men and gambling clubs and all," declared Frank.

"Oh, it isn't what it used to be," deprecated Mr. Temple. "I understand Chinatown is quite civilized now. Neverthless, I expect we shall find much to interest us. I'll speak to the head waiter. Probably he can direct us to a guide."

On being consulted, the head waiter agreed to obtain them a guide. Presently, the boys and Mr. Temple were on their way by auto to the unique city within a city which constitutes San Francisco's Chinatown, a quarter housing more than 30,000 Chinese. Oriental in every characteristic, with narrow alleys and courts, cellars, sub-cellars and sub-sub-cellars, the dragon roofs of Chinatown lie just below Nob Hill, the old aristocratic quarter of San Francisco with its veritable palaces of stone. From the terraces of the latter, one can look down into the alleys of Chinatown. So close neighbors are these two opposite districts of the city by the Golden Gate.

At the corner of Grant (once called Dupont) and California Streets, the guide halted their car and the party alighted. The boys looked around them with delight. In every direction were houses and stores speaking of the Orient. Close at hand on one corner

was a Catholic church, one of the landmarks of the district. On another corner was a restaurant from which came strange Chinese music.

Up the California Street hill droned a strange little cable car, it sides open and passengers facing outward. Below, clear in the moonlight, lay the Bay with a lighted ferryboat making the crossing.

While the boys were drinking it all in, and staring owl-eyed at the slippered Chinamen in baggy pants and blouses shuffling past, their guide was in converse with a stranger. Now he approached Mr. Temple and touched his cap.

"Sorry, sir," he said, "but this is where I leave you. I'll turn you over to this man."

Mr. Temple regarded him sharply, then looked at the other.

"Isn't that a bit unusual?" he asked.

"No, sir," said the original guide, "this man has certain territory here which we let him cover by agreement. When he has shown you around, you'll find me here, sir, and I'll continue with you. Shall I dismiss the car, sir? You'll spend some time here, and might as well dismiss it now and get another later, rather than have it eat up fares."

"Very well," said Mr. Temple. "Here." And he handed the man a bill.

Under the conduct of the new guide, the party

started down Grant Street. The original guide watched their disappearing figures several minutes, then walked over to the chauffeur at the wheel of the hired car.

"Gave me a tenner, George," said he. "Here's your split. I wonder what 'Black George' wants with 'em. Look like fruity pickin's all right."

"Easy, pal. Easy," said the chauffeur, low-voiced. "What the Big Chief wants with 'em is his own business. We had our orders to pick 'em up an' we carried 'em out. Climb in and we'll blow."

The other complied, and the car departed.

Meantime, midway of the next block the party had come to a halt. The new guide, a capable man of middle age with a twinkling eye turned to Mr. Temple.

"Now, sir," he said, "just what would you like to see?"

"Nothing rough," said Mr. Temple hastily, looking at the boys. "Just show us the usual tourist places."

"Oh, Father," protested Bob, aggrievedly. "We want to see the sights."

"The young man wants some excitement," said the guide, slyly. "Well, maybe we can show him a thing or two."

Mr. Temple did not like the man's tone. Nevertheless, he made no comment.

"Lead on," he said shortly.

Flanked by Bob and his father, and followed by Jack and Frank, the guide brought them presently to the mouth of a dark alley. There he paused.

"Up here's the Joss House," he said. "Chinamen's temple, you know. Follow me single file. It's dark in this here alley, but we'll soon be all right."

Obediently, they fell into line behind him and stumbled along through Stygian darkness, only the dim light from the street over their shoulders. Presently, the close walls on either hand turned sharply to the right, and they emerged into a narrow courtyard. It was so dark their surroundings could only be guessed at.

"Look here, my man," said Mr. Temple, "I went to a Joss House in Chinatown once years ago, and I don't seem to remember this route."

"It's all right," said the guide. "The place is just ahead here through a door. Follow right along."

Mr. Temple took several more steps, the boys after him, then halted again. Once more he started to protest, but at that moment the guide turned and grappled with him while a number of other shadowy forms materialized out of the darkness and closed with the boys.

The boys and Mr. Temple fought valiantly, but numbers were against them. Moreover, the attackers threw over the head of each a sack that muffled their outcries and prevented the boys and Mr. Temple from directing their blows. Taken altogether by surprise, they were quickly overcome. Then their hands were tied and they were raised to their feet, and the sacks, which were almost suffocating them, were removed.

A revolver was shoved threateningly into each face.

"Won't do you much good to scream," said a voice in the darkness, "but if you do, you know what you'll get."

There was a grim earnestness about the tone which commanded belief.

"If it's money you want——" gasped Mr. Temple, who was breathing heavily.

"Shut up," said his guard. "Now march."

With two guards to each, the four prisoners were shoved along the broken cobbles of the dim courtyard until a door in a wall was reached. Through this they entered a corridor even blacker than the courtyard behind. There were no lights. One of the guards, however, threw the rays of a flashlight ahead.

An iron door barred the way. A little wicket was

opened as the flashlight played over it, and a slanting almond eye stared out unwinkingly. The man with the flashlight advanced, uttered a word in a low voice that the boys could not overhear, and then the door was opened.

Down another pitch black corridor, several turns, and the party halted before a second door. The procedure was similar to that gone through with at the first door. Again they were admitted.

All this time, shuffling along in a silence broken only by an occasional stumble or muttered curse, on the part of one of the guards, they had been descending. It seemed to the boys as if they had stumbled down so many various flights of steps that they must be in the very bowels of the earth. At last a third door was opened, and Mr. Temple and the boys were shoved ahead accompanied only by the man who had been their guide and betrayer.

They stood in a dimly lighted room of Oriental magnificence.

Two men sat at a table. One was inscrutable. He was an old Chinaman. The other wore a sinister smile. He was the man of the train—"Black George."

CHAPTER VII

A BREAK FOR LIBERTY

THE heavy iron door closed behind them with a slight grating sound. Jack turned his head. The door could not be distinguished from the wall. Hangings of thick silken stuffs covered it.

"Black George" continued to smile unpleasantly, the Chinaman to regard then inscrutably. Neither spoke. The atmosphere was close and heavy, and pungent with strange Oriental odors and scents. The boys waited for Mr. Temple to take the initiative, and he was sizing up the situation.

Obviously they were trapped. And not for money. The presence of "Black George," whom they had overheard on the train and who had spied on them since at the Palace Hotel, meant only one thing to Mr. Temple. That was, that the underworld leader suspected them of having learned something of his plans.

Why had he brought them here? Again, there could be only one answer. He wanted to prevent

them from informing on him to the authorities. Either he would hold them prisoner, or intimidate them with threats so that, when released, they would fear to betray him.

How much did he know? Was he aware that they already had conferred with Inspector Burton? Had he shadowed the boys to the inventor's store? Did he know or suspect the plan to utilize Inventor Bender's device for locating the radio station at the smugglers' cove?

Mr. Temple told himself it was not possible that "Black George" knew to what lengths they had gone already. Otherwise, of what use to him to capture them? The damage already was done. And, if he did not know that they already had laid their information before the authorities and that even now the move to locate the smugglers' radio was launched, then it behooved him and the boys not to tell. For, if they told, "Black George" would be forewarned, and Inspector Burton's plans to round up the smuggling band would be thwarted.

Mr. Temple glanced quickly at the boys. Would they tell? Each in turn caught his eye and gave him a scarcely perceptible nod of reassurance. It gave him something of a shock, for he realized that their active minds also had been sizing up the situation and, probably, had arrived at the same con-

clusions as he. They were letting him know that they could be counted upon.

Good boys! For a moment, a little mist obscured his eyes. He had been accustomed to thinking of them only as youngsters. But this summer was opening his eyes. They had played men's parts on the Mexican border. They could be counted on in this unfortunate business, too.

All these thoughts, which require some time to record, had passed through Mr. Temple's mind with lightning-like rapidity. Not a word had been spoken since their entrance.

"Black George" continued to smile at them evilly, the Chinaman to regard them with the impassive and inscrutable countenance of his race, their false guide to stand motionless to one side.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" demanded Mr. Temple angrily.

He determined to adopt the attitude that the ordinary citizen not in possession of the key to the situation would be likely to adopt under similar circumstances. It would not do to let "Black George" see they suspected his reason for entrapping them. That would indicate to him that they already had taken action against him.

"If it is money you want," he said, "say so and be done with it."

"Black George" spoke at last.

"My dear Mr. Temple," he said, "perhaps we may get some of your money, too, before we finish with you. But that isn't our first object."

Turning to their attendant he commanded:

"Bring some chairs and then leave us."

Silently but swiftly, the man brought lacquered stools without back supports, placed one behind each of the four, then lifted the hangings and disappeared.

"Sit down," said "Black George" in a suave voice, "and let us talk things over."

They complied.

"I hope," said "Black George," "that my men did not handle you roughly. They had instructions not to, and if they disobeyed they shall be punished."

"Come, come," said Mr. Temple, "drop this note of hospitality and come to the point. We are prisoners, we have been foully entrapped. What is your object?"

Dropping something of his suavity and letting more of his true character show, "Black George" leaned forward.

"I think you know, Mr. Temple," he said, "my reason for bringing you here."

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Temple was determined to maintain an attitude of outraged innocence.

"I mean," said the other, his voice growing more harsh, "that you have been meddling in matters that did not concern you."

"Explain."

"Your young men"—with a sweep of the hand that indicated the three chums—"overheard words not intended for their ears on the Flyer from the East. They sat on the observation platform while I was in conversation with a companion."

"Well?"

"No, it's far from well," said the other menacingly. "You called Inspector Burton to your apartment at the Palace."

He paused and looked fixedly at Mr. Temple.

"Now," he resumed, "I want to know just how much of my conversation these boys overheard, and just what they told Inspector Burton."

Further pretence of innocence was useless.

"And if we refuse to tell?" queried Mr. Temple.

"Black George" grinned evilly. He looked long at Mr. Temple and the boys in turn. Then he addressed the silent old Chinaman.

"Would your men like to play with them?" he asked.

"Um."

"Would they like to torture those young boys?"

"Um."

"Would they like to apply the water cure and the red-hot needles?"

"Um."

"And pull out fingernails?"

"Um."

The old Chinaman never changed expression.

In spite of their courageous spirits, the boys shivered. Mr. Temple thought only of the boys, not of himself. Would these scoundrels really torture them? It was unbelievable. Yet if they should——

"Look here," he said gruffly, "quit this nonsense. This is the twentieth century, and such things are not done. We are not children to be frightened by such talk."

"Ah," said "Black George" smoothly, "but this is San Francisco's Chinatown. Don't forget that. You probably thought it was not possible to trap you, either. But you notice it was done. Your presence here ought to be sufficient indication to you that torture is not impossible."

"You, scoundrel," blazed Mr. Temple, "you'll pay for this. Others know where I have gone. My original guide from the restaurant is waiting for me, and——"

"One of my men," said "Black George" succinctly. "And your chauffeur, too."

"Well and good, but the head waiter at the restaurant has my name and——"

"My man, too," said "Black George." He rose suddenly, walked close to Mr. Temple, and leaned over and glared into his face.

"Furthermore," he added, "supposing you get out of this scrape, don't try to make trouble for them. My agents don't know all I do, but I protect the men useful to me. Understand?"

As Mr. Temple kept silence, controlling his features, but in reality sore at heart, "Black George" started to move backward slowly.

Suddenly big Bob, who all the time had been quietly working his hands free from the hastily tied bonds, leaped upon him. Bob's hands went around the other's throat, throttling him and preventing him from crying out.

At the same moment, Frank and Jack, who also had been working at their bonds and with equal success, leaped for the old Chinaman. The latter moved with surprising swiftness for one of his age. Springing from the chair, he waved a long dagger which mysteriously appeared in his talon-like hand and began to shout a shrill jabber of Chinese words.

Jack leaped in low, arms extended, making a

flying tackle as he so often had done on the football field at Harrington Hall Military Academy. The old Chinaman started to move backward, waving his dagger.

Frank swung the lacquered stool upon which he had been seated aloft and sent it hurtling through the air. His aim was deadly. The heavy stool caught the Chinaman square on the side of the head, just as Jack pinned him around the knees.

He went down like a log, his dagger clattering to the floor.

CHAPTER VIII

CHINATOWN WINS

THE old Chinaman, whose name they came later to know as Wong Ho and who was a very evil man with many ruffians at his command, was uncon-cious but breathing heavily. When Frank ascer-tained that, their fears that they had killed him passed away. While Jack attended to tying him up, Frank turned his attention to Bob and "Black George."

Mr. Temple was out of the fight. He had recov-ered from his amazement and dashed in to help his son with more valor than discretion. "Black George," threshing about wildly in the endeavor to break Bob's grip on his throat, had lashed out with his feet. A tremendous kick had caught Mr. Temple in the stomach and sent him reeling and gasping to the floor, where he was very sick, indeed.

Like a bulldog, Bob held on. Yet in "Black George" he had an opponent worthy of his mettle. That underworld leader had not gained his suprem-

acy by his wits alone. He was a tremendous rough-and-tumble fighter.

Back and forth they threshed on the floor as Frank paused above them, uncertain where to strike to aid his comrade. Bob still gripped "Black George" about the throat, but the gangster had so powerful a grasp on his hands that he was unable to bring a fatal pressure to bear.

Suddenly, and by an almost superhuman effort, "Black George" heaved himself up to his feet with Bob clinging to him. He must not be allowed to win. Frank swung aloft another lacquered stool, remembering the execution wrought previously on Wong Ho by the same method, and brought it down on "Black George's" head.

The stool splintered in his grasp. "Black George" relaxed, went limp, then collapsed.

"Whew," said Bob, panting. "I guess I'd have gotten him, Frank, but I don't know. He's a tough fighter."

Jack's voice behind them rose in a scream.

"Look out. Here they come."

They whirled to face the new danger. And in through the doorway behind the hangings poured a dozen ruffians. Jack bounded to the side of his companions. The newcomers were Chinese, and evil looking they were in the dim light of that subter-

ranean room, with their glaring almond eyes and yellow faces. They gripped revolvers and long knives, and as their eyes took in the two figures of their leaders on the floor a hoarse murmur arose and they started to surge forward.

It was a tense moment. The boys resolved to sell their lives dearly.

Then two things occurred. The leader of the newcomers and only white man of the group—the same man who had acted as their guide and betrayed them—halted the onrush with a gesture of authority. And Mr. Temple, pallid from the effects of the kick in the stomach, pulled himself to his feet and stood swaying in front of the boys.

"We surrender," said Mr. Temple, "but I warn you not to ill-treat us."

The leader nodded, turned to the group behind him, bade two of their number step aside, and the others to leave. Grumbling and unwilling but evidently cowed by his authority, they obeyed.

As the hangings fell behind the last to leave, the guide, whom later they came to know as Matt Murphy, turned to them, his face grim enough.

"Ye showed sense," he said. "They'd ha' killed ye."

Stooping over "Black George" he examined him hastily. Then he did the same by Wong Ho.

"Here," he said to the two Chinese attendants, "one of you get Doctor Marley at once. The other help me."

With the man who sprang to his aid, Murphy started to lift the unconscious form of "Black George." Then he bethought him of his prisoners, and addressed Mr. Temple.

"Stay in this room," he said, "and I can protect ye. The only way out is the way you come, an' nothin' could save ye from these yellow devils if ye get started. I'll be back."

Without more ado, he and his silent assistant disappeared with their burden, returning almost at once for the still unconscious Wong Ho.

After his second departure the three boys and Mr. Temple were left undisturbed for a long period. Their first act was to take account of injuries. Frank and Jack had come off unscathed. Bob was sore about the shins from kicks delivered by "Black George," but otherwise unhurt. Mr. Temple's kick in the stomach had been the most serious injury received, but he was rapidly recovering.

"I'm not blaming you boys for your gallant attempt to win freedom," said Mr. Temple, "but our position now could hardly be worse."

"I'm sorry, Dad, if you think I made matters

worse by jumping on that rascal," said Bob. "When I saw him threatening you I saw red."

"Anyhow," declared Frank, "if we had captured them, Uncle George, without being surprised by these others, we might have used them as hostages to obtain our freedom."

Mr. Temple shook his head.

"Perhaps," said he, "but it was a very long chance. However, we shall have to make the best of it."

"At least we have won a respite," said Jack. "We have pretty well laid out their two leaders. They won't recover for some time to come, if I'm any judge of broken heads. And meantime it isn't likely, is it, that this other fellow, who seems to be one of their lieutenants, will do anything to us?"

"Probably you are right, Jack," said Mr. Temple, "and we will be kept prisoners but not harmed, pending the recovery of this 'Black George' if not the Chinaman. But afterward——"

He left the sentence unfinished, but Bob took up his thought.

"We can face that when we have to, Dad," he said. "We're safe enough."

"Yes, I presume we are safe for the present," said his father. "Nevertheless, do you realize there is no friend at large who has any idea of our whereabouts, or knew that we came sightseeing to China-

town to-night? We did not tell the clerk at the hotel. The only persons who know are the people that villain declared are his creatures—the head waiter at the restaurant, and the chauffeur and our original guide."

"But surely," expostulated Frank, "when we fail to return to the hotel, there'll be a big uproar. You are a man of importance, and your business representative here as well as the hotel people will get the police on the case."

"Very true," said Mr. Temple, thoughtfully. "Yet this is evidently a well-organized gang that has captured us, and we might be hidden away forever in such a place as this without being found."

"But you forget Inspector Burton," said Frank. "When he hears of our disappearance, he will put two and two together and will realize that we have fallen into the hands of the man whose plans we thwarted—namely, this 'Black George'."

"Yes," admitted Mr. Temple, "there is a little hope for us there. Yet Inspector Burton planned to leave for southern California to-night to watch Handby as well as try to locate the smugglers' radio with Inventor Bender's sound detector. He may not hear of our disappearance for some time."

"But, Dad," said Bob, "it'll be in all the papers in a day or two. The news will be telegraphed to the

papers in southern California, and probably he will read it."

"There is some hope of that, of course," admitted his father.

For some time longer the discussion continued along this vein. Then Murphy again made his appearance, and put an end to it.

"You're to write a note to the Palace," he said, "telling the hotel people to cancel your rooms an' give your baggage to bearer. Send a check, too, for your bill. An' don't write nothin' phony. Tell 'em you're goin' for a sea voyage with a friend. That'll fix it if there are any questions asked about you by friends you may have in the city. Here's paper an' pen," he added, laying the articles on the table. "Git busy an' write."

"And if I refuse?" demanded Mr. Temple.

"If you're a man of sense," said Murphy roughly, "ye'll do as you're told."

All thought of that devious passage which was the only entrance to the room, of the barred doors across it, and of the villainous, armed Chinamen along the route. Murphy was right. Mr. Temple would have to obey.

"But, look here," he said, taking up the pen and preparing to write. "What are you going to do with us?"

"The Big Boss is gonna take ye to sea with him while he recuperates," said Murphy. "Ye give him a fractured skull that'll take him a while to get over. But the minute he opens his eyes he plans what to do with ye an' tells me. He says he'll save ye up to deal with when he recovers. He's savin' ye up for himself. See?"

They saw. Only too plainly. "Black George" was a vengeful man who meant to exact full measure for his injuries. With a sinking heart, Mr. Temple wrote the note demanded. Note in hand, Murphy paused at the door for a last word ere departing.

"I wouldn't like to be in your shoes," he said.

CHAPTER IX

THE POWER OF THE UNDERWORLD

THIS was a blow. Decidedly, a blow.

As the door closed behind Murphy, Mr. Temple and the boys looked at each other with dismay written plainly on every countenance. They were to be taken to sea at once, and to an unnamed destination. Furthermore, Mr. Temple had been compelled to write to the Palace Hotel management a note which would prevent suspicion being aroused by their failure to return to their rooms. Mr. Temple's business associates would inquire for him at the hotel next day, when he failed to keep appointments, and would be told of the explanation contained in the note. They might consider his departure abrupt and unusual, but certainly they would not be likely to consider it so strange as to demand investigation by the police.

What hope was there that their disappearance would cause a police investigation that might, possibly, lead to their relief? Or that at least would be heralded in the papers, and so come, perhaps, to

the attention of Inspector Burton, who could guess the solution?

None.

Without a word spoken, these thoughts passed through the minds of all. They realized they were in the hands of a very shrewd scoundrel, who had foreseen the possibilities of the situation and had taken care to guard against the arousing of public suspicion over their disappearance.

There was this other phase, too, to be considered —namely, that "Black George" might vent his anger against them for their attack upon him in fiendish tortures. As Mr. Temple thought of this, he groaned aloud.

"Boys," he said, without raising his head from his hands, "I've certainly gotten you into a terrible situation."

Big Bob laid a hand on his father's shoulder.

"Don't take it so hard, Dad," he said. "We aren't dead yet."

"No," said Frank, his spirits rebounding, "and we are not likely to be dead, either, for some time to come. Why, Uncle George, we have bested this rascal at every turn so far. It's true, we are his prisoners. But, without his knowing it, we already have set the machinery of the government in motion to put an end to his smuggling of Chinese coolies.

And in the fight, we most certainly got the best of him and his Chinese friend."

Mr. Temple raised his head, and looked a bit more hopeful.

"Besides," declared Jack, "we were in some pretty tight places on the Mexican border, and yet came through with flying colors. And I'm confident we will do so again."

Mr. Temple even essayed a trace of a smile, as he regarded the tall, handsome, curly-haired lad. Jack was a year older than Bob and, though not so stout of frame, was fully as tall. Both were an inch under six feet. And Jack, like his companions, was hard as nails.

"Why, Jack," said Mr. Temple, "I believe you like to be in a bad hole. Actually, I believe you are enjoying yourself."

"Bob and Jack had most of the fun on the Mexican border, flying to the Calomares ranch and rescuing Mr. Hampton, while I was left behind at the cave with nothing to do but——"

Big Bob thwacked his chum on the back resoundingly.

"Yes, with nothing to do but save the day and half kill a husky Mexican officer," he said. "You certainly were out of luck!"

"Oh, that's all right," said Frank. "Just the

same, you fellows had more fun out of that adventure than I did. Now it looks as if I was declared in. And I can't say that I'm entirely grief-stricken."

Mr. Temple shook his head.

"You boys will be the death of me," he said.

Nevertheless, their sturdy courage and optimism cheered him greatly.

For some time the talk went back and forth, the boys doing their best to cheer Mr. Temple. They realized dimly how great was his anxiety, far more on their account than on his own. And by belittling the dangers and persisting in regarding the whole matter as a lark, they hoped to dispel his gloom to some extent.

The various objects of the room came in for attention. The room itself proved to be steel-walled, and circular, the walls covered with heavy Oriental hangings. No lights were suspended from the ceilings. The only light came from several tinted bowls on a massive walnut table, very low and stained with age. Investigation disclosed electric light bulbs within the bowls.

"Let's find the switch and throw the room into darkness when they come for us," cried Frank eagerly. "Then we can jump them and gain the upper hand."

The big door close to where he stood grated slightly and swung open and Matt Murphy stood in the aperture.

Had he heard, wondered Frank. He gave no sign.

"Come," he said.

Mr. Temple and the boys regarded each other gravely. Without a word spoken and without premeditation, they clasped hands. Then Bob sprang to take the lead from his father. If danger threatened in the corridor, he would receive the brunt, rather than let his father accept that exposed position. Jack forced Frank to fall in behind Mr. Temple, and then himself brought up the rear.

But nothing unexpected occurred in the corridor, and they reached the dark courtyard, after passing through the guarding doors, without mishap. If any of them thought to cry out for help now that the outer air was gained, that thought speedily was dispelled. Matt Murphy leaned close, revolver in hand.

"One word and you are all dead men," he said. Then he waved toward a clump of shadowy figures ahead, which the boys and Mr. Temple could discern as their eyes became more accustomed to the darkness.

"Chinese," he said, "an' awful quick with their knives. I'm warnin' ye. That's all."

Thereupon Murphy fell silent, standing beside Mr. Temple. And the group ahead, between the prisoners and the dark mouth of the alley exit to the streets of Chinatown, also was motionless. A slight sound, sibilant, as of whispering, came from it. Murphy, however, vouchsafed no conversation.

"What are we waiting for?" whispered Frank, the irrepressible.

"Ye'll see in a minute," answered Murphy, shortly.

Out of the doorway behind them, a moment later, debouched a little cavalcade. In the center of a group of six or eight bobbing heads rose a dark object that swayed perilously as it lurched through the door. Murphy sprang toward it with a low-voiced curse.

"Careful there, ye haythens," he commanded.

The object steadied and came closer. Then the boys could see it was a closed palanquin, borne by eight Chinese.

"Whew," whispered Frank, impressed in spite of himself. "I didn't know there were any of those things left in existence."

"Must be that old Chinaman we laid out," ventured Bob.

The burden bearers passed the little group. Silken curtains were drawn tightly about the palanquin, and

the boys could not see within. It disappeared with its bearers, looking in the darkness like some gigantic spider, into the mouth of the alley across the court. Murphy joined them.

"Come," he said. "An' remember. One cry out o' ye an' ye are all dead."

"Was that the old Chinaman?" whispered Frank.

Murphy, a talkative man himself, already had noted that irrepressible quality in Frank. He chuckled grimly.

"Ye'd talk in hell, youngster, wouldn't ye?" he said. "No old Wong Ho stays here. That was the Big Boss."

They were moving across the courtyard, obedient to Murphy's command. The guard of Chinamen had closed around them.

"But, say,'" asked Frank, "will they carry that thing through the streets?"

"Shut up," growled Murphy, "an' do what you're told. Here we are. Now in with you."

They had emerged upon the dimly lighted street of Chinatown whence they had approached the courtyard trap under the impression they were being taken to a Joss House. Not a shuffling sandal slithered up or down the block. All was deserted as a graveyard. There was a reason. Guards at either end of the block, unostentatiously loitering on the

sidewalk, had dropped a word, and in that quarter it was sufficient. No whites happened to be passing, and as for the Chinamen they scurried away without looking back.

"In with you," repeated Murphy, pushing the boys and Mr. Temple into a taxicab with blinds drawn, which stood at the curb. It was the same in which they had approached Chinatown, although they did not realize that fact.

A motor van stood behind. The palanquin had been placed in it with the ends of the supporting poles resting in leather thongs dependent from the sides. This was calculated to break any shocks of the passage to the pain-wracked form of "Black George."

Murphy swung in with his prisoners, as did one of the Chinese guards. The taxi started downhill. Behind lumbered the van.

CHAPTER X

CARRIED CAPTIVE TO SEA

"WHAT did you say your name is, Mister Enemy?" questioned Bob of Murphy who sat next to him.

"Murphy'll do," grunted the other. "Matt Murphy."

"Well, Mr. Matt Murphy, you don't mind if I talk a little, do you? It relieves my feelings."

"Talk all ye please," said Murphy, "so long as I hear ye. But don't shout. An' don't try any funny business, because ye have no weapons, none of ye, while I an' my little Chinee friend have 'em to spare."

"Then," said Frank, impudently, "why don't you spare us some, and make matters more even?"

"Gwan wid ye," said Murphy, secretly amused at the boy's daring. "None o' yer lip."

Frank was not speaking thus without cause or merely from folly. He cherished the hope that perhaps their two captors could be thrown off guard and overpowered, whereupon they could proceed to overawe the taxi driver outside. But he quickly

realized Matt Murphy was on the alert, while the Chinaman, whose head showed in the little light coming in from the front window, undoubtedly also was ready to cope with any attack. It was difficult for Frank to realize that in a great city they could thus be carried away captive. Yet he was forced to admit to himself that such was the case. A similar realization of the hopelessness of their position, had he only known it, was being borne in on his companions, too.

If he alone were in danger, thought Frank, he would shout for help, attack his captors, and run the risk of being shot or stabbed. But when he thought that such an attempt to gain freedom might result in Bob or Jack or Mr. Temple being killed, he shuddered, and could not bring himself to make the attempt. Similar considerations restrained each of the others.

All this time the auto had been making good progress, although the boys from their sketchy knowledge of San Francisco's topography were unable to make any surmise as to the direction in which they were being driven. They had climbed and descended several hills and were now on a stretch of level going which, however, was rutted and uneven and far from smooth.

Abruptly the auto was brought to a stop. The

chauffeur tapped on the window in front. All but a small oval of the partition was boarded up, and the Chinaman's head obscured that. At the signal, Murphy reached for the door, but the chauffeur was ahead of him and opened it from the outside.

"Here we are," said Murphy. "Climb out."

Mr. Temple and the boys descended, the Chinaman bringing up the rear. The motor van drew up behind them at almost the same moment, its rear doors were swung open and the palanquin was thrust out and lowered to the shoulders of its former bearers.

They stood in a lonely spot on the northern shore of the peninsula where San Francisco is built. The nearest habitations were rusty ship chandleries and homes of Italian fishermen on a ragged street some distance in the rear. A suspended street lamp, swinging in the wind, cast strange shadows over the rough frame structures as the boys looked back. Not far away rose Telegraph Hill, with other lights starring it in irregular pattern.

About them were scattered odds and ends of the waterfront, broken oars, tarry barrels and even the skeleton of a long boat from which the boards had been ripped away, exposing the curved ribs half buried in the sand.

Ahead and not far distant lay an unroofed wharf

with a steam craft of considerable size beside it. Toward this the palanquin was borne, and up a gangplank to the deck of the boat. Beyond the bow of the craft, pointing into the stream, showed the dark waters of the Straits, with the wooded and mountainous Marin County shore opposite, and the lights of Sausalito shining in the distance.

A last desperate hope of escape was in each boy's mind as they glanced anxiously about. But the surroundings were not prepossessing. Who was there to hear a cry for help in those desolate surroundings? Who to lend a helping hand? No, it would be folly to make a dash for freedom now. Especially, inasmuch as not only did they have Matt Murphy, his Chinese satellite and the chauffeur to reckon with, but also a half-dozen others indistinguishable in the gloom, who stood a little to one side, prepared to deal with them if necessary.

Obedient, therefore, to Murphy's command, they followed toward the vessel, trod the loose boards of the wharf with lagging feet, passed up the gangplank beneath the light and stepped aboard. Not giving them any time for looking about, Murphy immediately led the way to a small salon from which opened a number of cabins. Mr. Temple and Bob were given one, Frank and Jack another. Their bags from the Palace Hotel already were in the

rooms, and on a bunk Mr. Temple found a small heap of silver and bills with a brief note of explanation that this constituted change from his check. A receipted bill was with the money.

"This looks bad, boys," said he, pocketing the money. "This scoundrel Folwell evidently has a tremendously effective organization. The way in which we were brought here, this steam trawler—for such I take her to be, and that means a ship that can weather heavy storms, the expedition with which our belongings were brought from the hotel, even the careful accounting for my money—all these give convincing proof that it is no common desperado with whom we have to deal."

Frank yawned. They were all gathered in the little cabin assigned Mr. Temple and Bob.

"Ho, ho," said Frank, stretching, "I'm sleepy."

The older man regarded him enviously.

"I wish I could feel like that," he said.

"Well, I don't see anything much to worry about," said Frank. "We're going on a sea voyage, and I love the sea. We are on what practically amounts to a pirate ship, and pirates always have fascinated me. We don't know where we're going, but I'll bet it's to the smugglers' cove. And we don't know what dark and dreadful fate is being reserved for us, but we can cross that bridge when we come to it."

"For my part," he added, lowering his voice, "I'll bet that before he's through with us Mr. 'Black George' Folwell will wish he had let us alone. Such trusty adventurers as Bob and Jack here, to say nothing of myself—notice my modesty—are liable to take his ship away from him before we're through with this business."

Jack clapped him on the back, and Bob roughed his hair.

"Attaboy."

"That's the idea."

Frank merely had given an expression to their own sentiments.

"If we only had a weapon or two," mourned Jack.

Mr. Temple, with an exclamation, reached for his bag. Then he groaned dismally.

"No use."

"What's the matter, Dad?" asked Bob.

"Oh, Jack made me think of an automatic which I carried in my bag. But you see the bag's open. These fellows foresaw the possibility of their containing weapons and probably have gone through them all."

"Let's have a look, anyhow," said Bob, starting to rummage. He was unsuccessful. The revolver had been taken from the receptacle.

"Oh, well," said Jack, "we'll have to keep our

eyes open and our wits about us, that's all. In a shipload of armed men, it would be strange if we couldn't come by a weapon somehow."

"Or, maybe, make a friend who will come over to our side," said Bob suddenly. The big fellow was slower in his mental processes than his two chums, but when he spoke it usually was to the point.

"That's right, Bob," said his father, brightening, "of course, of course. Why hadn't I considered that possibility before? A cruel man like Folwell must make some enemies among his men, especially if they have finer instincts and are not content merely to get their pay and carouse."

"I was thinking of Matt Murphy," said Bob.

"Speak of the devil," said Frank, but so low his words were not heard.

For at that moment, Murphy put his head in through the door.

"We're off," he said. And it was true. The engines began to clank, the screw to churn. The trawler quivered and headed out into the channel. "In ten, fifteen minutes, we'll be passin' through the Golden Gate," said Matt Murphy. "Them portholes ain't big enough to jump out, so I ain't worried. But put your eye to 'em an' ye'll see."

Abruptly then, as if half sorry for his display of interest, he closed the door and they were once more

alone. They looked from one to the other, and Mr. Temple nodded satisfaction.

"You're a discerning lad, Bob," he said.

The others nodded. That was all. But, rightly or wrongly, the impression was beginning to grow upon them that in Matt Murphy, "Black George's" right-hand man, they might eventually find a friend.

CHAPTER XI

"BEST LAID PLANS"

"How fast do you imagine this boat is going, Mr. Temple?"

Jack asked the question at the breakfast table next morning. None of the four were seasick. At their homes on the far end of Long Island they maintained a speed boat. Bob and Frank, in addition, owned an airplane. All, as a consequence, were long since seasoned to the pitch and toss to which they were now subjected.

Breakfast had been served in the salon by several Chinamen under the eye of Matt Murphy. The room, as well as their cabins, they saw had been refitted luxuriously. The quarters were considerably larger than one would expect to find aboard a trawler, and the furnishings were those of a wealthy sportsman's yacht. In addition to the two cabins opening from one side of the salon and which they occupied, two others were similarly located opposite. One was occupied by Matt Murphy who, apparently, was

captain of the vessel, and the other by "Black George."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Temple in answer to Jack's question. "But a boat such as this is not built for speed. Its especial quality is staunchness."

"Well, but how fast do you imagine it is going?"

"About eight knots an hour or thereabouts," said Mr. Temple, considering. "That would be nine to ten miles. A nautical mile, or knot, you know, is between one and one-sixth and one and one-seventh land miles. But, why, Jack? What have you in mind?"

Jack glanced at "Black George's" door. It was closed. The other, he knew, lay there helpless to move, under care of a man whom they had not yet seen. So much had been gathered from Matt Murphy. The latter had disappeared above deck. Leaning closer, Jack lowered his voice. Instinctively, to hear him better, all put their heads together.

"It was midnight when we came aboard," said Jack. "It is ten in the morning now. That means we have been at sea ten hours. We have gone one hundred miles, if you are correct about our speed. Now we are heading south. Our cabins are on the port side and the sun from the east is in our portholes.

"Do you know what?" He leaned closer.

"What?" asked Frank.

"I believe we are heading for the smugglers' cove. And that's in the south somewhere."

The others nodded.

"Well," continued Jack, "I've been thinking this over. San Diego is about six hundred miles south of San Francisco, isn't it, Mr. Temple?"

"Roughly that. Go on. What have you in mind?"

"Just this. The smugglers' cove is either above or below San Diego, said Inspector Burton, and not far from it in either direction. We shall reach San Diego in forty-eight hours more, at this rate, or about this time day after to-morrow. If the cove is this side of it, probably we would make it to-morrow night. If it is below San Diego, probably we would reach there the following night.

"Now, hold your horses, Frank," Jack interrupted, good-naturedly, as he saw Frank growing impatient. "I'm coming to the point.

"What I have in mind is simply this: With 'Black George' *hors de combat,* and Matt Murphy lukewarm, we may have a chance to seize the ship before we reach the smugglers' headquarters. If we don't do it before landing, our chance to gain our freedom later will be slim. And the way I figured it out, we can't reach the smugglers' cove until to-morrow night at the earliest, which gives us the best

part of two days in which to see what we can do."

Warm approval was voiced by Frank and Bob. Mr. Temple, however, spoke of the almost insuperable handicaps—their lack of any sort of weapons, their ignorance as to the numbers or composition of the crew, or even as to the physical characteristics of the ship. He pointed out they had been forbidden to go above deck and, consequently, would know nothing beforehand of their field of battle.

"I agree with you, boys, of course," he added, in conclusion, "that, if we can seize the ship, we must do so. But it is one thing to conceive an idea, and a far more difficult matter to work out the details. However, let us go into my cabin and leave the door open into the salon. There we can discuss the situation from every angle with less fear of discovery."

"There is one thing I haven't mentioned yet," said Jack. "I've been so excited that it slipped my mind this morning. That is, I have a radio receiving set that may come in handy."

"Yes. That ring set which Inventor Bender showed us. I persuaded him to sell it to me, you remember?"

The boys nodded.

"Well, when we went out sightseeing last night,

I wore it on my left hand, and there it still is." And Jack held up the device for inspection. "The inventor said it had a receiving radius of ten miles. It may mean a lot to us before we see the end of this adventure."

The ring-radio of Inventor Bender is worthy of more extended mention and, inasmuch as later it was to play a noteworthy part in the adventures of the boys, perhaps it would be well to describe it at this time.

In the first place, Inventor Bender's ring-radio was not, strictly speaking, his own invention, but rather an adaptation of a similar device earlier invented by Alfred G. Rinehart, a young radio wizard of Elizabeth, N. J.

The young inventor had not patented his device, but to an interviewer representing The Radio Globe of New York he had given a sketchy description of its operations, suppressing details. This had come to Inventor Bender's attention. With no desire to steal another's idea, but merely for his own amusement, he had taken up the matter and devised his own ring-radio, and this it was which he had sold to Jack.

The head phones and connecting wires from the ring to the phones and to aerial and ground were intact in his traveling bag, Jack already had ascertained. Whoever had searched the bag for possible

concealed weapons had not considered it important to take them.

"Even my umbrella is strapped to my bag," said Jack. "You remember Inventor Bender said I could connect a lead to the metal stem of the umbrella for aerial and stick a screwdriver into the earth for my ground connection. Of course, there is no earth here, but salt water will do even better."

The ring of this set was the coil, slender, only slightly more than an eigth of an inch in diameter, and encircling the finger. The mounting comprised the controls and measured only 1 x 1-2 x 7-16 of an inch. These measurements included the brightly polished bakelite panel on which were mounted a diminutive crystal detector and small switch control connected with the coil by nine taps, permitting of nine different tuning adjustments by means of a movable band making connections in the heads of nine tiny brass studs set in the panel in the form of a semicircle. The whole was no larger than many ornate rings, and resembled one in appearance.

"Mr. Bender said it would receive on wave lengths up to and including 550 meters," Jack explained. "This trawler undoubtedly has radio. In fact, I saw the aerial when we came aboard. Probably, sooner or later, it will open communication with the radio at the smugglers' cove, and we can hear it."

"But any conversation would be in code," protested Frank. "Besides, they might use a very high meter wave length, and your set would be unable to receive."

Jack looked thoughtful.

"I've considered that," he said. "Naturally. Nevertheless, I have the feeling that this little radio ring will be mighty handy, indeed."

Meanwhile, the party had adopted Mr. Temple's suggestion and retired to his cabin. The conversation now was directed by the older man into a consideration of the possibilities. If they were to make an attempt to capture the ship, he declared, it was vitally necessary to their plans to know something of the composition of the crew and the physical aspect of the vessel itself.

Frank, Mr. Temple believed, seemed to have won Matt Murphy's regard to some extent by his breezy manner. To him, therefore, was delegated the delicate task of sounding Murphy in an effort to learn how strongly he was attached to "Black George."

"Be careful, however, not to give him any indication of what we have in mind," warned Mr. Temple. "If you report that you saw any sign in Murphy's words or manner that we could construe favorably, why then, I'll have a talk with the man if possible."

It was Mr. Temple's thought that he might appeal to the cupidity of Matt Murphy by the offer of a substantial reward and to his fear by letting him know how close upon his leader's trail were the officers of the government.

Like many well-laid plans, however, this was to come to naught. All that day the barometer acted queerly and Matt Murphy kept the deck. And at nightfall, after a growing mugginess that made it almost unbearably hot below deck, the sky which had been growing steely, as they could see from their cabin portholes, became entirely overcast. Soon the entire patch of sky visible from the portholes was black as ink, and had it not been for the switching on of the lights by a Chinese attendant sent down by Matt Murphy it would have been similarly black in the cabin.

"Isn't a storm in this part of the ocean at this time of year unusual, Dad?" asked Bob. "I understood never a storm occurred along the California Coast between June and late September."

"Yes, Bob, it is unusual," answered his father, occupied in reading a sea story which he had found on a shelf of books in the salon. "Listen. What's that?"

CHAPTER XII

A STORM AT SEA

A SOUND as of a vast drum being beaten, a drum bigger and more sonorous than anything ever conceived of, suddenly filled the salon. The walls seemed to quiver. So great was the noise, so shattering, that all put their hands to their ears, as if their very eardrums were threatened. The boys and Mr. Temple who were alone, looked at each other in alarm.

The next moment the trawler, which until then had been riding on even keel, heeled far over, so far, indeed, that it seemed as if she could not right herself. Caught off guard the boys were tossed against the doors of their cabins and bruised badly by the impact. Then slowly, like a swimmer coming to the surface after a dive, the ship righted herself only to begin a tossing motion that was frightful.

"First the rain," shouted Mr. Temple, who by clutching the table had maintained his equilibrium, "and now the wind. That's all."

The door of the companionway was thrust back

rudely, admitting a cascade of water that washed across the floor and the reeling form of Matt Murphy. His head hung low and there was that in his attitude which told Frank, the most sensitive of the boys, that he was in trouble. Frank sprang to his assistance.

"Good boy," said Murphy, thickly. "Shut the door or the whole Pacific Ocean will be in here."

Frank slammed the watertight door and then turned to Murphy. His companions also had gathered around. Murphy grasped the table with his left hand. The right arm hung useless.

"Me arm's broke I guess," he said. "Git that doctor out o' the Big Boss's room. Calls himself a doctor, anyhow."

Frank hastened to pound on the door of "Black George's" cabin. At first there was no answer. Then a weak voice began to curse, the sounds barely audible to Frank above the roar of the storm.

He was uncertain what to do and turned to appeal to Murphy. The latter, reeling and clutching the table, interpreted his action aright.

"Open the door," he said.

Frank complied.

On a tumbled berth lay the form of "Black George," with head bandaged, recumbent, relaxed, breathing heavily. In a corner on the floor, as

if tossed there by the action of the ship, half lay, half crouched a little fat man with gray hair and ragged gray mustache. As Frank opened the door he looked up, through bleared eyes, ceased mumbling and stared in fright.

"Don't take me, Mr. Devil. Please don't take me," he pleaded piteously.

Frank was thrust aside by Matt Murphy, who had come to investigate. Despite his broken arm, which must have been giving him great pain, the latter advanced to the cowering form in the corner.

"Why, you're not even drunk," he said, after a moment's scrutiny. "I believe you're just scared. Come. Out wit' ye."

Seizing the other's collar with his sound arm Murphy started to drag him into the salon. It was the boy's first sight of the man taking care of "Black George." Since they had come aboard he had not left the cabin to their knowledge. Chinese servants had taken his food to him. For that matter, they had seen nobody in authority except Matt Murphy. First mate? Second mate? Engineer? If the vessel owned them, at least they had not been seen.

Now the frightened little fat man grasped Murphy by a leg and almost pulled him to the floor. He babbled incoherently. Murphy tugged at him a moment, then tossed him back into his corner in disgust and

started to withdraw. His eyes fell on the still form of "Black George." He stooped over him, raised his eyelids, let them fall, and with an oath of disgust quit the cabin for the main salon, slamming the door behind him.

Dispiritedly, he slumped against the table.

"Master down an' out wit' drugs," he said. "That's what comes av association' wit' these Chinee people. You get to be a dopefiend. An' doctor so scared he's av no use. Uh."

Frank advanced.

"Look here, Mr. Murphy," he said. "If your arm's hurt, let us examine it. Bob here is a pretty good hand at rough surgical work. He took a course in first-aid, so he could help out in football accidents at school."

Murphy looked up hopefully.

"That so? Well, have a luk, lad. Here"—addressing Frank—"ye'll find bandages an' splints an' iodine in that cabinet in my cabin. Go an' git 'em. An' bring me that bottle o' licker ye'll find there, too. I nade somethin' to put sperrit in me this night."

One long pull he took at the bottle of liquor, then ordered Frank to take it away, after Mr. Temple had declined his offer of a drink.

"One's enough," he said. "I've got work to do an'

must kape my head. Now lad"—extending his arm and addressing Bob—"go ahead."

Murphy was without a coat, and Bob's first move was to cut away the left sleeve of his flannel shirt. Deftly Bob worked, aided now and then by his companions, while Murphy sat without a groan throughout the whole operation. Beads of perspiration dotted his forehead. At the end, however, his arm was neatly and stoutly bound in splints and lashed across his chest.

"That's wan I owe you, boys," he said, when the operation was completed. "Matt Murphy don't forgit. Now I'll be on me way to the bridge, or that Chinee at the wheel will be droppin away from the wind an' there'll be the Divil to pay."

As he rose to his feet and started for the door, Frank intervened.

"Won't you let me come up to have a look around, Mr. Murphy?" he begged.

"I will not," said Matt Murphy, violently. "Don't ye know why I kept ye below all day? 'Tis because the Chinees have it in for ye for half-killin' Wong Ho. There's only two I kin trust an' them's the wans as cooks for ye an' serves the food. Stay where ye are an' be safe."

With that he opened the door, reeled back before the force of the wind and the swirling gray hail of

rain, then lowered his head and charged through, pulling the door to behind him.

"So that explains why we've been kept below here," said Mr. Temple thoughtfully. "Well, the prospect if we fall into the hands of the Chinese crew doesn't look pleasant."

"I've heard," said Jack, "that the Chinese idolize certain leaders, and will go to any lengths to obtain revenge for injury to them."

Mr. Temple nodded.

"Nevertheless," he said, hopefully, "this man Murphy seems a pretty good sort, rough as he is. He'll do his best to protect us."

"Yes," declared Frank, "it seemed to me tonight that he was beginning to regret being a party to our captivity. He doesn't want us to fall into the hands of the Chinamen. And he's disgusted, too, with his employer. Maybe, we'll get him on our side yet."

"He'll protect us from the Chinamen all right," said Bob. "But when his boss, 'Black George,' recovers, he will be powerless. If this scoundrel is saving us in order to exact vengeance on us for the way we laid him out, we'll be in a pretty fix."

"Listen," said Jack. "I have an idea."

"What?"

"Why, here is 'Black George' helpless, with only a fright-crazed little pudding of a doctor to help him.

Let us take possession of 'Black George' and gain the whip hand over Murphy. Then we can compel Murphy to come over to our side, perhaps."

"How?"

"Why, we'll buy our freedom with the freedom of Murphy's master."

"I don't believe it can be done, Jack," said Mr. Temple thoughtfully. "It isn't only Murphy with whom we have to reckon, but these Chinamen, too. With them above all. 'Black George' probably doesn't mean much to them. They would rather see him killed than see us escape their clutch. They probably feel that when we reach the smugglers' cove they can compel 'Black George' to turn us over to their tender mercies, and that is the only reason they have been content to keep hands off so far."

Jack was silent. The force of Mr. Temple's reasoning was apparent to him.

"Well, then," he said presently, "we'll have to capture the ship in some way. That's all. And, perhaps, we can persuade Murphy to give us weapons and help us overawe the Chinese crew."

"Perhaps we can," said Mr. Temple. "Meantime, let us all turn in and get some sleep. Tomorrow will be the day on which we must make whatever attempt we decide on. And we'll need all our strength and alertness then. Frank, do you and Jack be sure to

lock your cabin door again as you did last night, and we will do likewise. Let us each take a heavy chair into our rooms, too. In case of a night attack, we can at least pull the chair apart for clubs. And now, good night."

Mr. Temple thereupon turned in. For some moments, more, however, the boys chatted and tried to read, but at last they, too, retired. As far as they could tell, the storm continued to rage undiminished.

"I wonder what tomorrow will bring forth, Jack," said Frank, just before going to sleep.

"I wonder," said Jack. "Good night."

CHAPTER XIII

HOPE IS "IN THE AIR"

JACK waked early the next morning and lay in his berth wondering drowsily for several moments as to what caused his feeling that there was something unusual in the situation. Then he jumped alertly to his feet and ran to the porthole.

The trawler was motionless. When he retired it had been tossed about by the storm. Now its engines were stilled, its screw was not turning, and except for a slight rolling motion it lay as calm as in a harbor. Could it be they had reached the smugglers' cove during the night? It was this alarming thought which sent Jack to the porthole.

But a look at the outer world convinced him to the contrary. There was no land in sight. And as he was on the landward side, he considered this a pretty good indication that they were not in port anywhere. Of course, the trawler might have swung about, so that her starboard side lay toward the land. He

sniffed. There was no land smell in the salty air. He listened. No land sounds came to his ears.

Perhaps the trawler had broken down in the storm, perhaps something had happened to engines or screw. Jack had the natural curiosity of a young fellow in his 'teens and wished that he might go on deck and investigate. He thought of Matt Murphy's prohibition, of the Chinese crew thirsting for the blood of himself and his comrades.

But, after all, he reassured himself, if he merely poked his head up the companionway nobody would see him. He would be safe enough. And at the recollection of that clean sunshine flooding all the world outside, which he had seen through the porthole, and of the magically calmed sea, he decided he would have to obtain a glimpse of the world above decks, get a lungful of fresher air, no matter what happened.

All this time he had been hurriedly getting into his clothes. A look showed him Bob slept on. Unlocking the cabin door, he stepped soundlessly into the salon.

It was empty of human occupants other than himself. The door of the Temples' cabin was closed. "Black George's" cabin door was closed. So, too, was that of Matt Murphy. Jack gave fleeting thought to the question of how that worthy had sur-

vived the stress of the night. Was he still on deck? Or had he retired to rest? If the latter, who was in command?

"Certainly is a queer layout, anyhow," Jack mused. "Murphy and the doctor the only white men we have seen other than 'Black George.' Aren't there any officers? Are all others aboard Chinamen? Well, here goes."

And trying the handle of the outer door, and finding it turn soundlessly, he opened it inch by inch. The companionway was empty. A short flight of steps led to the deck. Mounting several, he found his head on a level with the deck and started to raise it cautiously to peer out.

The sound of low-voiced conversation came to his ears, and instinctively he bent down again. Listening a moment, he decided that he had not been seen, for the whispering went on. It came, he believed, from a point not far to the right, on the other side of the wooden bulwark of the companionway.

He held his breath, straining painfully. Whoever they were, they were speaking in English. Yet neither voice was that of Matt Murphy. Who could they be? He had to see.

Slowly, slowly, scarcely moving, yet edging forward all the time, Jack peered around the bulwark.

Presently he saw them. They were two in number, and one was the little fat doctor who looked after "Black George." The other was a sodden-looking man of middle age, with a smudge of grease over one eye and his face generally dark with grime and coal dust. He was in his undershirt and carried a wrench in his right hand.

"We'll soon have her fixed now, Doc," this latter individual was saying, "nothing wrong but a couple of bolts shaken loose in the storm. Thought I'd better lay up and tighten things generally. That's all. Well, so long, I have to keep them Chinks moving or we'll never get the work finished."

The engineer, Jack correctly surmised. He started to move on. The fat little doctor laid a detaining hand on his arm, and glanced around nervously. Jack hastily withdrew his head, only to advance it again cautiously a moment later. The doctor's back was turned.

"Mr. MacFinney," he said to the engineer. "You don't know what's happening to your engines while you're away, do you?"

"Not with them Chinks around," said the other, laughing a little. "They don't know much about machinery."

"The Chinamen," said the doctor, darkly. "That's just it."

"What's the matter with you, Marley?" said MacFinney, thrusting his face closer to the other's. "Out with it, man. Have ye something on your mind? Or is it just the drink again?"

Doctor Marley drew his fat little form upright, as if to resent the rough remark. He was cursed with the habit of secret drinking, and it was on that account he had lost his practice and had fallen into the state of a creature to "Black George." But resentment did not last. He was frightened. The next moment he laid a trembling hand on MacFinney's arm.

"Mr. MacFinney," he said, low and hurried, "I'm afraid the Chinese may have put your engines out of commission, or may be doing it now while you are absent. You know our Chinese cook is a strange fellow, hates the others, or at any rate has little to do with them. And he said something——"

MacFinney started forward with an oath.

"If they're up to any monkeyshines, I'll fix 'em."

Doctor Marley ran after him, laying a hand on his arm.

"Oh, do be careful, Mr. MacFinney," he pleaded, all a-twitter with fear, as Jack could observe. "Please be careful. What—what would I do, if anything happened to you?"

MacFinney regarded him scornfully.

"So it's yourself you're thinking of. What might happen to me doesn't matter on my account. But you need me for protection, hey?"

"Oh, Mr. MacFinney. Oh. You mustn't think that. But it's those boys that Mr. Folwell brought aboard. They injured Wong Ho. I bound up his head before I left. And he's their leader, he's——"

"Yes, yes, I know," interrupted the engineer, impatiently. "But don't delay me. If what you suspect is true, and I wouldn't put it past them Chinks, it's high time I was gettin' below."

Jack waited to hear no more. He did not want to be discovered by Doctor Marley, if the latter chose to return at once. Retreating noiselessly down the companion, he re-entered the salon. It was just as he had left it. But when he opened the door of his cabin, he received a surprise.

Frank was at the porthole with his back turned and the headphones of Jack's ring-radio set clamped to his ears. Jack's thoughts flew at once to the ring, and he remembered having taken it off before retiring and placing it on a stand against the wall. He looked. It was not there. Obviously, Frank, on awaking, had noticed it and had been impelled to take the parts from Jack's bag and make an attempt to listen in on the ether.

On tiptoe Jack crossed the cabin and peered over Frank's shoulder. His chum had one arm through the porthole, clutching the extended umbrella. One wire led to the wire stem. Another wire dangled downward to the sea, although Jack could not, of course, observe more than the fact of its direction. Here were aerial and ground. Jack tapped his chum on the shoulder, but Frank, with serious face, frowned at him, and Jack interpreted the look to be a request for silence. Perhaps Frank was hearing something of moment. He stood to one side, waiting for Frank to speak.

Evidently his chum was straining hard to hear. He even closed his eyes, the better to concentrate. What could it be? Jack had news of his own to impart, important news, but in Frank's attitude he sensed something that bespoke importance too. Suddenly Frank opened his eyes.

"That's all," he said. "The conversation grew fainter and fainter. Now I can't hear at all any more."

"What was it? What did you hear?"

"Just two ships talking, Jack. That's all."

Frank smiled teasingly, as he folded the umbrella and pulled it back through the porthole, then laid off the headphones and began hauling in the ground wire.

"Just two ships, that's all. You don't mind my taking liberties with your toy, do you, Jack?"

"Of course not. But, look here, you heard something that excited you, Frank. Quit joshing. What was it?"

Frank turned a serious face, his eyes gleaming.

"Jack, the funniest thing. I heard two ships talking, or rather, only one ship talking to another. The replies of the second I couldn't hear at all."

"That ring-radio has a radius of about ten miles," said Jack. "Perhaps not quite that much. That accounts for it. You heard the ship that was within our radius, but not the other because it was too far away to be heard. But what was said? Business, I suppose?"

"Business, my eye," said Frank. "The one nearby was the U. S. Sub Chaser X-51. And as far as I could gather, it was talking to a coast liner bound north for San Francisco aboard which was Inspector Burton. He was asking the sub chaser to run alongside the liner and take him off. Remember, I could only hear what the sub chaser replied. I gathered from something said that the liner could not be so very far away. The sub chaser started for it, however, and as it drew away from us the radio got fainter and fainter until I lost it altogether."

"A sub chaser that close to us," said Jack, highly excited. "That decides me. We've got to act at once. Come on."

He seized Frank by an arm and propelled him toward the door.

"But here. Wait a minute. I'm not half dressed yet. What's the matter with you?"

"Jump into your clothes quick. Meantime I'll get hold of Mr. Temple and Bob and bring them back here. We have got to talk to that sub chaser and turn her this way."

"Talk to her?" said Frank, perplexed. "You must be crazy. With this little receiving set, I suppose."

"No, with the trawler's radio. But I'll explain when I return. Jump into your clothes."

CHAPTER XIV

THE UPPER HAND REGAINED

JACK was highly excited as he dashed into the main salon and made for the door of the Temples' cabin. And with reason. He believed that now, if ever, they must attempt to seize the trawler.

The Chinese crew threatened to get out of hand and seize the ship themselves, in order to make sure of their vengeance upon the boys for what they had done to Wong Ho. If the boys anticipated them, and got the upper hand, they could send a call for help by radio to the sub chaser. It would be a matter of only a very short time before that speedy craft could swing about and come to their rescue. Moreover, they would thereby capture "Black George" Folwell. And Inspector Burton had said it would be a feather in the cap of any man to accomplish that undertaking.

The main salon still was deserted, and the doors to the cabins of "Black George" and Matt Murphy still closed. Jack did not know, of course, whether Doctor Marley had returned to his patient. But

he believed that probably the frightened little man had waited above deck to see whether Engineer MacFinney found any signs of sabotage.

The Temples' door resisted. It was locked. But Bob's voice called sharply:

"Who's there?"

"It's I, Jack. Open up quickly."

He heard Bob hit the floor, and grinned, even in the midst of his excitement. The big fellow evidently was sleeping late. By the time Bob had opened the door Frank stood beside Jack, completing a sketchy toilet by tucking shirt into trousers.

"Bob, Mr. Temple. We have got to try and seize the trawler at once."

This was Jack's opening remark, as he and Frank closed the door to the salon.

Father and son, pajama-clad, sleepy-eyed, looked at him in amazement.

"Are you crazy, Jack?" asked Bob.

The older man, however, regarded Jack keenly.

"You've heard something, Jack," he said. "What is it?"

Briefly and graphically Jack related his morning's adventurous prowling and the result of his eavesdropping. Then he told what Frank had overheard by the use of the ring-radio.

"That decided me," he said. "When I heard there

was a sub chaser near, I felt we just had to make an effort to capture the trawler's radio room at least, and call for help. We can hold out until the sub chaser comes up."

Mr. Temple grew grave.

"But without weapons," he said, "what chance have we against the Chinese?"

"Look here," said Bob, slowly, "I'll bet this fellow 'Black George' has a revolver or two in his room. He's bound to keep a weapon handy. Well, he was helpless last night, and probably still is. What's to prevent our going in there and taking it from him?"

"Good idea, Bob," said Frank. "And there's my friend, Matt Murphy, too. According to Jack, he isn't up yet. Probably put in a bad night and is sleeping while the ship's engines are being repaired. He undoubtedly has a revolver, too. Suppose we compel him to give it to us. His arm is broken, and surely if we burst into the room we can overawe him."

The others nodded approvingly, and the eyes of the three boys lighted up with enthusiasm. Mr. Temple shook his head gravely, but continued to make a hasty toilet nevertheless.

"Pants and shirt, Dad," said Bob. "That's all we need. Have to hurry."

In a trice the two were thus sketchily clad, stand-

ing in their bare feet, and then Jack, who had assumed command, gave his orders.

"Mr. Temple," he said, deferring to the older man's judgment, "I believe we had better split into two parties and enter the two cabins simultaneously, don't you? If we all go into one cabin first, either 'Black George's' or Murphy's, intending to follow into the other later, the probability is that we would alarm the occupant of the other cabin and put him on his guard."

"Yes, Jack, that's right. Suppose Bob and I tackle 'Black George' and you and Frank go after Matt Murphy."

"Right," said Jack, his hand on the door.

"One thing more, boys," cautioned Mr. Temple. "Go in quickly and quietly, and get your man before he has a chance to fire. We shall do likewise."

The boys nodded. Then Jack opened the door and, with beating hearts, the four filed out. Jack tiptoed across the salon to prevent his shoes making any sound. The others were in their stockinged feet. Two and two they ranged outside the doors of the two cabins. Mr. Temple nodded that he and Bob were ready. Jack did the same. Then they flung open the doors and dashed in.

Jack and Frank found Matt Murphy sleeping heavily. One look showed an automatic in an ammuni-

tion belt suspended from a nail above his head. With one swoop Jack caught the weapon and belt to him. The movement disturbed Murphy, who was lying fully clothed on his berth, the bandaged arm across his chest. He looked at them, then with a roar raised up, but Frank pushed him back on his pillow. Jack drew the weapon and presented it at him.

"Quiet now," he said, in a low voice. "We don't want to hurt you. But our lives are in danger from the crew and we mean to protect ourselves."

Murphy lay back, and a gleam came into his eyes. He looked from one to the other.

"Are they attackin' ye or do you just guess they're goin' to?"

"They haven't attacked us yet," replied Frank. "But we're not waiting for what we know would come. Look here, Mr. Murphy, you know what the sentiment of the Chinese is toward us. Well, my friend Jack here overheard something this morning which indicated the Chinese planned immediate action. Now——"

"Come right in," invited Murphy sarcastically, looking over Frank's shoulder. "This is my hour for receivin' callers."

Frank whirled.

Mr. Temple and Bob were in the doorway.

"What luck?" he asked eagerly, while Jack, not

to be diverted, continued to keep eye and revolver trained on Murphy.

"The man is still drugged," said Mr. Temple. "We found not only one revolver, but two and a knife besides."

"Was the doctor there?" asked Jack.

"No."

"Mr. Murphy, where is the radio room?" Frank demanded.

"On top av this cabin," replied the recumbent man. "But little good it'll do ye. MacFinney, the engineer, is the only wan aboard who can operate it, an' till the engines git goin' there'll be no juice if it's callin' for help you mane to do."

They looked at each other in dismay. Here was a contingency that had not occurred to them. Jack groaned aloud. But ere any of them could speak, the stamp of the engines suddenly began. MacFinney had gotten them repaired, whether his Chinese had tried sabotage or not. The engines seemed to gain confidence. A slight quivering shook the trawler.

"There's your juice, lad," Matt Murphy said gruffly, reaching out his sound hand to pluck Frank's sleeve.

Frank whirled, a broad smile on his face.

"Look here, Mr. Murphy," he declared, "I believe you are on our side at heart, aren't you?"

Murphy sat up on the berth, swinging his legs over the side.

"Not I," he said. "I'm Folwell's man. But when ye point a revolver at me an' order me to get up an' navigate the ould tub, what can I do?"

"Right," said Frank gravely, although his eyes were dancing and the corners of his mouth twitched. "Well, captain, will you please navigate?"

"Sure," said Murphy. "Follow me."

As they started out of the salon and up the companionway stairs, Bob pressed a revolver into Frank's hand.

"Take this," he whispered. "I have the knife."

"But Bob——"

"But nothing. If it comes to fighting at close quarters I've got more beef than you. You keep them off with that revolver, d'you hear? Don't let them get near you."

Frank, the smallest of the three chums, pressed Bob's hand gratefully, grasped the revolver, and followed in the wake of his big comrade, thus bringing up the procession headed by Matt Murphy.

The latter paused as they reached the deck and looked toward the wheel. He had left it lashed. Not a soul was in sight. The others grouped themselves about him. He addressed Frank.

"I don't like the looks av things," he said. "The

Chinks must all be in the fo'c's'le, hatchin' their plots. Will ye trust your prisoner to go below an' see how MacFinney is comin' along? An' do you meantime while the engines are turnin' over, an' ye have your chance, go into the radio room off the bridge. 'Tis up this ladder." He indicated a narrow iron-runged ladder beside him, leading to the tiny bridge above. Keenly he regarded the boy. "Can ye use it when you're up there?"

"Yes, indeed," said Frank. "Well, here goes before a Chinaman sees me. Come on, gang."

And shinning up the ladder, he entered the room opening from the bridge, with Mr. Temple followed by Bob and Jack hard on his heels. One glance around, and he saw what he was looking for. The control apparatus for sending messages was on a stand against the opposite wall. Adjusting a head-phone, and pulling a microphone toward him, Frank reached for the knobs and began calling the Sub Chaser while manipulating them.

CHAPTER XV

ABANDON SHIP

"A FINE place for defense," commented Jack, looking about him.

"If we keep down, they may not even discover us," said Mr. Temple.

The front wall of the little radio room was composed of stout wooden panelling to half a man's height from the floor with glass above. Mr. Temple, Bob and Jack knelt or crouched behind this protective screen, their heads showing just above it, as they looked along the deck toward the forecastle where the crew was housed. The forecastle door was closed.

On the narrow deck below were two immense hatches opening into the hold where when the trawler was legitimately employed, fish would be packed. But "Black George" used that big hold in which to pack Chinese coolies. Beyond the hatches rose a stout derrick, and beyond that the forecastle. Behind the bridge and the radio room, or aft in the trawler, lay the engine room. That way the view

was cut off by the blank wall of the radio room against which stood the instruments which Frank was now trying to use.

"Listen," whispered Jack. "Frank's talking."

All three withdrew their gaze from the deck and glanced around.

"He's got the Sub Chaser," whispered Bob, gleefully. "Say, this is too easy. Why, we'll have help here before the Chinese ever realize what has happened. Hear that. Old Frank's giving the Sub Chaser our bearings right now, just as Murphy gave them to him."

A slight scratching sound caused Jack to face about in alarm. The door from the bridge stood slightly ajar, as they had left it on entrance. He listened. Someone was creeping up the ladder. Now he was on the bridge, creeping on hands and knees toward the door. Jack nudged Bob who was next to him, and laid a hand on his lips. They as well as Mr. Temple who was farthest away were all crouched so low to avoid being seen from the deck that they themselves could not look out.

In the silence Frank's voice rang clearly:

"Prisoners, I tell you. Yes, that's our position. What's that? I can't hear you. Hurry. This is ticklish. We've got their radio room, yes. They haven't discovered us yet. But when they do, they'll cut off

our juice. We'll hold out, all right. But come your fastest."

The creeping sound outside had ceased. Jack could bear the anxiety no longer. He raised his head cautiously. Nobody in sight as the deck came into view. The door of the forecastle still was closed. He rose a trifle higher to bring the bridge into view. Then he yelled as the door was dashed inward against him, knocking him to the floor.

"Black George," tall, powerful, his head bandaged, his eyes aflame with maniacal rage, stood swaying in the little doorway, crouched to spring.

Bob sprang forward. He had given his revolver, the one taken from "Black George's" room, to Frank. He had retained the long knife, but the unaccustomed weapon lay on the floor where he had placed it when he knelt, forgotten. He was unarmed. Mr. Temple shouted in alarm, and raised his revolver to fire. Then he dropped it again. He would hit his son.

Bob's right fist shot out, but "Black George" dodged and the blow slid harmlessly over his shoulder. With a snarl, "Black George" flung his arms about Bob's waist. They reeled out to the bridge , tight-locked together, swayed a moment on the edge, and then fell with a crash to the deck at the foot of the ladder.

It all happened so suddenly that by the time he

could regain his feet and dash out to the bridge, Jack was too late to prevent the disaster. Revolver in hand, Mr. Temple was a step ahead of Jack and started down the ladder, with eyes only for the two figures below, apparently not much hurt by the fall and writhing now on the deck. But Jack saw what the older man missed, and shouted a warning.

"Look out, Mr. Temple, here they come."

Frank had heard the shouts. With a last word to the Sub Chaser, he ceased radioing and ran out on the bridge. He too saw the menace, and realized there was no time to lose.

For out of the forecastle, aroused by the shouts, seemed literally to boil a dozen Chinamen.

Throwing up his revolver, Frank fired over their heads to scare them. Jack did likewise. Then both boys leaped to the deck beside Mr. Temple, who, oblivious of all but the danger to his son, was bending over the latter as he threshed about at grips with "Black George."

Some of the Chinamen sprang behind the derrick. Others flung themselves down behind coils of rope, several of which lay about the deck. In a twinkling the deck was cleared. Not a human mark was left to shoot at. Were they armed? That was the question the boys anxiously asked themselves. The answer came quickly, not in bullets, but in a knife that

whizzed unpleasantly close to Jack's head, burying itself inches deep in the bulwark behind him, where it stuck quivering, and in another that struck the deck at Frank's feet and would have caught him in the stomach had he not leaped backward in the nick of time.

"Fire a couple of shots to scare them, Frank," panted Jack, whose chest was laboring with the excitement. "Keep them down while I help Bob. We've got to get under shelter."

Obediently, Frank sent a bullet pinging into the derrick mast and another into a coil of rope. The latter shot brought a howl of fright, and a Chinaman darted from behind the rope and like a rabbit into the open forecastle door. Frank sent another bullet into the deck behind him to hasten his flight. The shots had a salutary effect, not a Chinaman so much as poked forth an arm to fire weapon or throw knife.

Jack meanwhile leaped to where Mr. Temple was trying to pull "Black George" from his son. But neither wrestler was willing to release his grip.

"We've got to get under shelter, Bob," cried Jack. "Break away."

"Let me alone," panted the big fellow. "I've got him now. Ah."

And with a sudden mighty heave, Bob rose upward. "Black George" rose upward, too. Over

Bob's head he went hurtling through the air. They all turned to look. There was a cry of anguish. Then a thud. Out of the engine room door Engineer MacFinney, emerging at that crucial moment, was met by the body of "Black George." Both fell to the deck together, then rolled backward down the engine room steps.

Several shots from the direction of the Chinese thudded into the bulwark. Frank replied.

"One of them behind the derrick has got a revolver," cried Frank, pumping several more shots into the derrick mast. "Keep up the fire on his position, Jack, so he can't take aim. I've got to reload."

Jack pressed the trigger. No result. He tried again.

"It's jammed," he groaned. "Mr. Temple, try your revolver."

The respite was enough for the armed Chinaman. Perhaps he saw Frank working frantically to put a fresh clip of cartridges in his automatic. He fired, just as Mr. Temple raised his revolver. The bullet sent the weapon spinning. A yell of triumph went up from the concealed Chinese.

It was a critical moment. Another such shot, and the Chinese would be encouraged to break from cover and make a rush across the deck. Frank

succeeded in reloading. But he was trembling so much from excitement that he could not steady his hand sufficiently to pump his bullets into the derrick mast as before, and the shots went high.

"This way, lads, quick," cried a voice.

It was Matt Murphy. He stood aft at the stern post, beckoning, and beside him was the fat little Doctor Marley, white with fright, trembling, wringing his hands. Bob, Jack and Mr. Temple started towards him. Frank who had taken one swift glance around, called that he would guard their rear and, sending an occasional shot along the deck, walked backward after his companions.

"Come on, come on," called Murphy's voice impatiently.

What did he want? What was his intention? Frank found time to wonder. Nevertheless, he did not relax his vigilance. Sending several more shots along the deck, he bumped into a form and whirled about. It was Murphy. Then the boy saw a boat in the water below, with the doctor and Mr. Temple already in it, Jack climbing over the thwarts and Bob sliding down the rope.

A yell of rage went up from several Chinese sufficiently courageous to peer from their hiding places and realize that their prey were escaping.

"Give 'em another shot to hold them," commanded Murphy.

Frank complied.

Several Chinese who had gained their feet and started forward threw themselves prone again on the deck.

"Now give me that gun," said Murphy. "I fixed your friend's gun for 'im, so ye'll have one in the boat. And down the rope with ye, an' cast off."

"But, but——"

"No buts about it," said Murphy, roughly. "I heard ye callin' for help an' I want none of Uncle Sam's men puttin' me in jail for the rest of me life. Over ye go, Jonah, an' good luck to ye."

CHAPTER XVI

DOCTOR MARLEY EXPLAINS

FRANK slid down the rope which Mr. Temple, braced in the bow of the boat, held steady for him. Jack and Bob already were at the oars and fending off from the side of the trawler. Fat little Doctor Marley crouched frightened in the stern.

"Give 'way," cried Matt Murphy, from above.

As he made his way across the thwarts toward the stern, the better to trim the boat, Frank glanced up. Over the rail of the trawler leaned Matt Murphy waving farewell with his uninjured hand, in which was clutched the revolver taken from Frank.

Frank waved as his chums bent lustily to the oars and the boat began to dance across the still water, widening the gap between it and the trawler. A feeling of regret at parting with Murphy crossed Frank's mind. A strange man, a leader of crooks, was Murphy. Yet Frank had been quick to sense the finer instincts beneath the surface and companionable traits which drew him strangely.

From the deck of the trawler there floated to them

now a high jabbering of Chinese. They were in sight, and the thwarted Orientals were angry at seeing their prey escape. They ran to the rail and leaned over, jabbering away. One—the man with the revolver—whipped up his arm and fired. The bullet skimmed the water close to the stern, and Doctor Marley whimpered and threw himself flat on the bottom boards.

The next moment they could see Matt Murphy coolly raise his weapon and fire. But not at them. His shot caught the Chinese gunman in the arm, and the latter's revolver fell into the sea as he seized the injured member and danced about in shrieking agony.

"Look," cried Frank, "he's driving them back into the forecastle."

Murphy was, indeed, driving the Chinese away from the rail. His voice came only faintly to the boat, but its occupants could see him kicking, striking with clubbed revolver, forcing the Orientals below. One by one they disappeared into the forecastle door until the deck was cleared of them. Then Murphy turned, a tiny figure now on the deck, and waved once more to the boat.

"Lay on your oars now, Jack," advised Bob. "Murphy said to lay here until the Sub Chaser, which had our position, picked us up."

"So Murphy gave you some explanation about things, hey?" asked Frank. "I'm all at sea all right, in my mind as well as the boat. What's it all about? Where did he come from so suddenly? How, with that broken arm, did he get this boat lowered? Why did he drive us off the trawler? And why did we come away, anyhow? We were in a ticklish position, but still might have held on until the Sub Chaser arrived. Then we'd have had our birds."

Bob glanced around the horizon.

"Not a sign of smoke indicating the Sub Chaser," he said, "unless it's that tiny film off there"—pointing to the southwest. "What position did the Sub Chaser give, Frank, and how far away was it?"

"That's the Chaser, all right," said Frank. "She was southwest from us and about fourteen knots away. Said she'd be up in an hour easy."

He pulled out his watch.

"Why," he declared, "it must have stopped. No"—listening—"it's going all right. But it certainly is hard to believe. Only twenty-five minutes since we left the cabin. I looked at my watch then. And less since I called the Chaser. It'll be some time before it comes up."

"Look," cried Jack pointing, "the trawler's belching a thicker smoke. And, yes—she's beginning to steam away from us."

"I suppose," said Mr. Temple, "that Murphy is going to try to escape." He called to Doctor Marley. "Doctor, you were with Murphy and helped him lower this boat. What did he say to you? Why did he help us at all? Did he tell you?

The fat little man crouching at Frank's side, still in an attitude of fright, looked up for the first time. As he saw the distance between the trawler and boat steadily widening an expression of relief lit up his face.

"Chinese frighten me dreadfully," he said, shuddering a little. "I'm so glad I escaped. And that man, 'Black George,' too. I have attended him before, and so his men came and got me out of bed the other night when he was injured. But I never dreamed of being taken on his boat. Oh, I am so glad I escaped."

"Yes, yes, Doctor," said Mr. Temple. "But tell us what you know, please."

"There isn't much to tell," he said. "I gathered from a hint dropped by the cook that the Chinese aboard wanted vengeance on you people because of the way you had laid out old Wong Ho, their leader. There is some queer clannishness, some tie, that I don't understand. But it is quite certain they did thirst for your blood.

"So I went to Engineer MacFinney and warned

him the Chinese might try to break down his engines, in order to seize the ship before it reached its destination and thus get you in their power without interference from Folwell's land forces. He went below, and presently called me and I joined him.

"He had the engines working. The dozen Chinese aboard were busy under his directions. He took me aside, out of their hearing, and ordered me to go to the Chinese cook—who, for some reason, probably because he was of another tong or clan, was not on good terms with the rest of the crew.

" 'Tell him,' he ordered me, 'to go into the forecastle and take away all the revolvers hidden there. He'll know where to find them. These fellows always carry their knives, but if they have any revolvers around, we'll appropriate those at least."

"I was frightened, gentlemen. I am a man of peace. But the burly engineer overawed me, and drove me forth to do his bidding. The cook found a number of revolvers and appropriated them, hiding them in his pans. But evidently, he overlooked one revolver or else the man possessing it carried it with him, for you were shot at several times by one of the Chinese."

"I'll say we were," declared Frank, slangily.

"Then," continued the doctor, "when I returned to the engine room, the Chinese all left. Perhaps they

suspected some treachery toward them was going on. At any rate, they scampered for the forecastle, and Engineer MacFinney couldn't stop them with his curses and blows.

"A moment or two later, Matt Murphy came into the engine room. Mr. MacFinney was working at his gauges. Murphy beckoned me, and I followed to the deck. He asked me to help him lower a boat and tie it to the stern. He said the Chinese were plotting an attack even then, and that if I wanted to save my life I must carry out his orders. I obeyed.

"As we worked, I asked whether he was coming, too? 'No,' said he, 'ye'll be picked up by Uncle Sam's men. Them byes are calling a speedy patrol boat by radio right now. I want to get 'em off an' away quick, so we can escape in the trawler. I don't want to be put in prison the rest o' my life.'

" 'But this trawler is slow,' I protested. 'How can you hope to escape from a fast patrol boat?'

" 'Fog,' said he. 'I can smell it comin'. After last night's storm, it's bound to come up. If it only comes in time we can hide in it, an' that's our chance.' "

"Fog?" cried Frank, alarmed.

So interested had all been in Doctor Marley's nar-

rative they had paid no attention to their surroundings. Now, at Frank's cry, they glanced around.

"Here it comes, too," Frank added, pointing toward the trawler. The vessel was more than two miles away, and making fast going. As Frank pointed, a wall of fog sweeping across the water engulfed it. One moment, the trawler stood out clear and distinct. The next, it had disappeared entirely from sight, and the fog was rolling toward them.

"Good heavens," cried Doctor Marley, "we'll be lost in mid-ocean. How can the patrol boat find us?"

"Here she comes now," Frank shouted, pointing to the southwest, where the sun yet shone.

"Two or three miles away yet," said Jack, anxiously, estimating the distance to where the speedy little craft was sending up two columns of water before her prow.

"Wow, and here's the fog," shouted Bob.

"Frank, you hold the rudder so that we make a small circle, and Bob and Jack, do you row easily," called Mr. Temple. "That will be better than merely drifting. The Sub Chaser evidently sees us. It must, for it is undoubtedly on the lookout. It ought to be up in fifteen minutes. Presently we'll begin to shout."

His directions were approved and carried out. Some twenty minutes later, in response to their shouts, a muffled hail came across the water. The boys plied their oars. Hails were repeated back and forth. Soon a dark bulk loomed ahead, they bumped into the Sub Chaser, and then one by one clambered to the deck.

CHAPTER XVII

LOST TRAIL

As THEY gained the deck of the Sub Chaser they were confronted by a young ensign in the uniform of Uncle Sam's navy. He regarded them keenly, then offered his hand to Mr. Temple.

"It seems we came just in time," said he. "A bit later and we would have had difficulty in locating you in the fog. As it was, we got your position through the glasses before the fog closed down. Did they set you adrift?"

"No, we broke away of our own volition, in a way of speaking," said Mr. Temple. "But explanations can come later. My name is Temple, George Temple of New York. This is Doctor Marley, and these young men are my son Bob and his chums, Jack Hampton and Frank Merrick."

"And mine is Arthur Warwick," said the other, acknowledging the introductions, "Ensign Arthur

Warwick, U. S. N., at your service. Let us go to my quarters."

Turning, he led the way with Mr. Temple beside him and the others following, under the gaze of a number of American sailors scattered about.

"Are you going to stick to the trail of the trawler?" queried Mr. Temple.

"We shall try to," said the other. "Although if this fog continues long, our chance of success will be small. We were heading for the S. S. Bear, a north-bound coast liner, to take off Inspector Burton of the Secret Service, when your radio caught us and faced us about. Now, from what Mr. Merrick said over the radio, I fancy we had better stick to this trawler as long as there is a chance of capturing her. If we miss her, I shall speed up to catch the Bear. Meantime, I have given orders to slow down with muffled engines, so that if we hear the trawler in the fog we stand a better chance. Let us go below, for I want to hear your story in greater detail."

In the tight little cabin of the Sub Chaser they were considerably crowded, but by disposing themselves as compactly as possible all found room. Then Mr. Temple and the boys told their story. It took considerable time in the telling, for Ensign Warwick asked so many questions they were com-

pelled to begin at the very beginning of things with Frank's overhearing the words dropped by "Black George" on the train.

Ensign Warwick nodded warmly many times during the course of the narrative, evidently in high approval of the courage and resource shown by the boys. He himself was a young man, not more than twenty-five, tall as Bob and of much the same deep-chested frame with tanned face in which twinkled honest blue eyes that impressed the chums favorably.

"You fellows certainly have been having a lot of fun," he said, half enviously, half laughingly. "While here am I with nothing exciting to brighten things for me since the war ended."

"Were you on the other side?" asked Frank eagerly. "Golly, how I wanted to go over, but Uncle George said I was too young."

Warwick nodded.

"I was on convoy duty," said he, "and had several brushes with German submarines. I was torpedoed twice, and once sunk a sub."

The three chums regarded him with the greatest interest.

"Just now," he continued, "I've been loaned to the Secret Service. Left San Pedro harbor only yesterday morning to report to Inspector Burton at

Santa Barbara. Evidently he had boarded the Bear at that port, however, and then changed his mind about going north, for he radioed me to take him off."

A rap on the door interrupted and Ensign Warwick called an order to enter. A sailor stood in the doorway, coming smartly to salute.

"Fog's not lifting, sir," he said. "And no sound to indicate the trawler. Your orders to report in an hour, sir."

"Right, Farrell," answered Ensign Warwick. "You may go."

The young sailor withdrew.

"How far down the coast are we now, Ensign?" asked Frank. "Murphy gave me our bearings aboard the trawler, so I could radio them to you. But I have no idea where that is on the map. We had been trying to compute the distance we traveled from San Francisco, but when we awoke this morning the trawler's engines were still, and I don't know how long she had lain there. You spoke of Santa Barbara. Are we near that point?"

"About fifty or sixty miles west-north-west," said the naval officer. He rose. "Shall we go on deck? In this weather I ought to be there."

They followed him from the cabin.

"Say, Bob," said Frank, as the pair dropped behind, "wouldn't it be fun to take a cruise aboard this Sub Chaser in pursuit of 'Black George's' gang?"

"Great."

"I mean not just after the trawler. Probably we'll lose her in this fog. But to go on a regular expedition, maybe to nose out the smugglers' rendezvous, maybe clear down into Mexican waters?"

"Great," agreed Bob again.

"Well, we've already had considerable fun out of this," declared Jack, joining them and leaving Mr. Temple and Doctor Marley to continue with the naval officer.

"Haven't we, though," agreed Frank. "Why, when we get back to Harrington Hall in the fall, and tell the fellows about this——"

"And about our Mexican border adventures, too," supplemented Jack.

"Huh. They'll think we're awful liars," said Bob.

All three laughed.

Mr. Temple turned and beckoned to them to approach.

"We are going to turn about and make a run for the Bear," he said. "Ensign Warwick believes this fog will not lift for some time, and that the trawler has pretty well given us the slip."

"Well, he's in command," said Frank, ruefully, "but I did hope we'd capture the trawler. I don't care so much about capturing 'Black George,' although it's a pity to let him slip through our fingers. But, do you realize that we're not very presentable for polite society? I'd like to recover our wardrobes."

For the first time it was borne in upon them that Mr. Temple, Bob and Frank were, indeed, scantily clad, and that most of their possessions were aboard the trawler. In their haste to act quickly in seizing the radio room, all but Jack had set forth clad only in shirt and trousers. They were even without shoes. In their excitement theretofore, none had thought of this.

"Fortunately, they did not take my wallet," said Mr. Temple, pulling it from a pocket, and examining the contents. "I have plenty of money here, so that as soon as we reach port somewhere we can send Jack ashore to buy us some clothing."

"We're a fine-looking bunch of thugs, now, though, Dad," said big Bob. "You and I both need a shave badly. Frank and Jack have such light whiskers, you can't tell whether they've shaved or not."

This was a cruel thrust at which Bob's two chums bridled. Bob's whiskers were heavy, and he had

been shaving for years. Frank and Jack, however, only recently had taken on man's estate in this respect.

"Some folks are proud of being hairy as an ape," said Frank cuttingly.

Big Bob merely laughed good-naturedly, and ruffled his smaller chum's hair.

Ensign Warwick with difficulty suppressed a grin.

"I can let you have razors," he said, "and probably we can find shoes for all of you of some sort. But I have no civilian clothes, and it would be against regulations for you to wear uniforms."

"Good thing the weather's warm," said Bob.

"Say, I have an idea," cried Frank. "Suppose I call Inspector Burton on your radio, Ensign, and ask him to see if he can't dig us up some clothes aboard the Bear. He knows us well enough to estimate our size, and, of course, I can give him further specifications."

"Go ahead," said the naval officer. "I planned to call him, anyhow, to report why we were delayed."

"Good idea, Frank," approved Mr. Temple, who did not relish the prospect of going any longer than necessary clad as he was. "Tell him I'll pay any price within reason for good outer clothing."

"You see," said Frank, starting away, "he may not want to put into any port for some time, and then we'd be out of luck."

"But you will be going aboard the Bear, won't you?" said Ensign Warwick. "I hadn't thought of that before, but, of course, that will be the thing for you to do. Then you can return to San Francisco."

The three boys glanced at each other in dismay.

CHAPTER XVIII

CLOSING IN

"DAD, we have got to see this thing through," declared Bob, turning toward Mr. Temple and voicing the desires of himself and his chums. "Surely, you won't put us aboard the Bear and return to San Francisco now!"

Mr. Temple smiled.

"Boys, I sympathize with you," he said. "But you will have to look at this matter reasonably. We have been drawn into this plot by force of circumstances, and so far have been unable to keep out of it. But we came to the coast for a week's business trip on my part, with you boys accompanying me to see the sights. I have got to return to San Francisco. Business demands my presence. And things have turned out providentially to enable me to do so."

"But, Uncle George——"

It was Frank who spoke. Mr. Temple shook his head.

"No, Frank," he said. "I'm sorry for your sakes. I know how all this adventuring must appeal to you young fellows. But do be reasonable. It isn't our business to run these crooks to ground. And besides, you have had plenty of adventure out of the situation already. I know I have had enough to last me a lifetime. When you get to be my age ——"

Bob grinned as he regarded his father's sturdy figure, and disreputable appearance, unshaven, clad only in a shirt, trousers and stockings.

"Age?" he interrupted. "Why, Dad, you look fit to tackle any pirate. And you needn't tell me you haven't enjoyed yourself pretty thoroughly."

Mr. Temple sighed.

"Oh, to be a boy again," he said. "You young rascals can't realize how I have worried over you this summer, not only in this situation but down on the Mexican border, too. Well, that will do. It's impossible for us to continue, if for no other reason than that there is no room for us aboard, and so, Frank, you radio Inspector Burton to get us some clothes and cabins aboard the Bear."

Ensign Warwick who had stood a silent witness to the scene, but sympathizing with the boys, interrupted to confirm Mr. Temple's statement about lack of room aboard the Sub Chaser.

"It's true we have no room for passengers," he said. "You saw our tiny cabin under the bridge. There are bunks for only captain and mate. Forward we have bunks for a crew of ten and a smaller cabin with four cabins for the engine-room crew. The latter also have two bunks in the engine room that can be used in emergency. And that is our total of housing space. You see, this boat, one hundred and ten feet long and with a maximum speed of twenty-four knots an hour, is built for speed and not for passenger traffic. I am not carrying a mate, and Inspector Burton will bunk in the latter's place. So you see, there is no room for you, at all."

"Have you a full crew?" asked Jack, unexpectedly. "I've seen only a half dozen men?"

"What you see," answered Ensign Warwick, "is the deck watch. We carry a crew of twenty-two, divided into three watches."

"Oh, where do they all sleep?"

"Some of them swing hammocks."

"Well, couldn't we swing hammocks, too?"

"Why, yes, I suppose you could," answered Ensign Warwick. "Of course, I could not take you if I were on regular duty. But as I have been put at the command of Inspector Burton of the Secret Service, I could manage to accommodate you after a fashion if he agreed."

"Come, come," interrupted Mr. Temple. "This is nonsense. Frank, go and call Inspector Burton."

Frank retired to the tiny radio room, accompanied by Jack while Bob leaned moodily on the rail and his father fell into conversation with Ensign Warwick. Doctor Marley stood unobtrusively aside.

Presently Frank and Jack approached Bob with eager faces. The naval officer had disappeared with Mr. Temple.

"Where's your father?" asked Jack.

"I don't know. Gone to get some shoes, I believe."

"Listen."

Then all three put their heads together, while Frank and Jack whispered to Bob tidings which quickly erased the gloom from his countenance.

"I'll go and call Dad," said Bob, finally.

At that moment Mr. Temple reappeared, shod in white canvas deck shoes.

- "Uncle George, I've just been talking with Inspector Burton," said Frank. "The Bear has a full passenger list. Summer travel is heavy, it seems. Inspector Burton suggests that we stay aboard the Sub Chaser, as he is going to return to Santa Barbara. He will put us ashore there, he says, and we can catch the night train to San Francisco and be there to-morrow morning, ahead of the Bear."

"Very good," approved Mr. Temple. "That will

give us time to buy clothes in Santa Barbara, too. Also, you boys can stay aboard this boat a bit longer, and I know that appeals to you."

The boys looked meaningly at each other. Then Frank laughed:

"That isn't all," he said. "The Inspector was delighted when he heard our story, and——"

"You told him everything?" queried Mr. Temple.

"Oh, no, I did not have time enough for that. But I did tell of our escape from the trawler. And he said the presence of the trawler here fitted into something he had in mind, which he would tell us about when he came aboard."

"I think," said Jack, "that he meant he had a clue to the smugglers' cove, and that it was somewhere along this coast."

Mr. Temple laughed.

"Oh, you boys," he said. "You can't give up hope of being in at the death, of having a hand in the round-up of the smugglers, can you?"

Doctor Marley venturing a timid question as to how he was to return to San Francisco, Mr. Temple entered into conversation with him. Ensign Warwick went to attend to his duties. The boys drew aside, and, leaning on the rail, stared into the thinning fog ahead and discussed their chances of seeing further action.

All were agreed that the veiled hint dropped by Inspector Burton indicated he had obtained a clue that the smugglers were somewhere along the adjacent coast. They speculated upon whether Inventor Bender's sound detector had provided the clue, or whether there had been sufficient time for the detector to be brought into play.

"You see," Jack pointed out, "the inventor planned to use sound detectors at several places pretty widely scattered, and it would take him some time to set them up."

"That's true," said Frank, "but the device required no time at all to hook up. The time needed would be for making the trip from San Francisco to the other stations. Say——"

His face lighted up.

"What?" asked Bob.

"Why, didn't Inspector Burton, when we saw him last in San Francisco, say one of the government radio stations which he planned to utilize in employing the sound detector was in the mountains behind Santa Barbara?"

"I don't remember that," said Bob, and Jack also shook his head.

"Well, that's what he said," declared Frank. "I'm certain of it."

"In that case," said Jack, "perhaps through the use

of sound detectors at San Francisco and in this mountain station, they were able to locate the smugglers' radio earlier than had been expected."

"Or, at any rate, they have obtained some clue which induced Inspector Burton to put back to Santa Barbara," said Frank. "You see, he said he had boarded the Bear for a port farther up the coast, not San Francisco but some small place near here at which the steamer touches, because he figured he could get there more quickly than by auto—which would be the only other way, as it is not on the railroad. Then he got a code message by radio, calling him back, and he radioed this Sub Chaser to pick him up."

"Aren't we slowing down?" asked Bob.

The boys had been so interested in their discussions they had not noticed a dark bulk looming across the waters in the thinning fog. Now the Sub Chaser slowed to a complete stop and lay, rocking gently in a mild swell, while a small boat put off from it for the Bear.

Presently, the boat returned and Inspector Burton stepped aboard. The big steamer and the little Sub Chaser saluted each other with toots, and parted company. Soon the Bear disappeared.

After greeting Ensign Warwick and his unexpected guests, Inspector Burton asked that they head

for Santa Barbara with all speed. Then he turned to the boys.

"Your inventor friend's device," said he, "has done wonders. And with what you have told me about your adventures in these very waters, I've been able to put two and two together, and to arrive at the conclusion that we are closing in on the smugglers' mysterious cove."

CHAPTER XIX

THE SOUND DETECTOR DETECTS

DURING the three-hour run east-southeast to Santa Barbara, which the Sub Chaser reached between two and three o'clock that afternoon, the fog lifted and the sun shone again, not only on the surrounding scene but on the spirits of the three chums as well.

For one thing, Mr. Temple was persuaded not to hurry their departure by train for San Francisco that night but to lay over in Santa Barbara a day. For another, the boys received from Inspector Burton's confidences the impression that in the next twenty-four hours developments of moment would occur in the situation into which they had been drawn. And, being on the ground, they believed they would be witnesses to such developments at least, if not active participants.

For the Secret Service man confided that Inventor Bender's sound detector had succeeded beyond his expectations and, incidentally, had entirely upset his previous calculations by what it revealed. He had believed, as earlier, in San Francisco he had

told them, that the smugglers' cove was somewhere near San Diego in all probability. But the sound detector very definitely had located it as in the group of wild islands off Santa Barbara.

"Those are the islands," he said, pointing to three mountainous formations rising from the sea to starboard. "Wild, craggy, isolated and large; sparsely inhabited, and not on any steamer track; not a town nor even a hamlet on any of them.

"They lie along this coast in a chain stretching seventy miles. There are three large ones, San Miguel, the most northern, Santa Rosa and Santa Cruz—the latter the largest and wildest. Then beyond Santa Cruz on the south lies the mysterious vanishing island, Anacapa. At high tide it is a group of little islands, almost submerged. At low tide, sandpits connecting the low hummocks are revealed. This gives it the name of 'Vanishing Island.' "

"And is it on 'Vanishing Island' you believe the smugglers are located?" asked Frank.

Inspector Burton shook his head.

"No, that island is practically uninhabitable, and, besides, would be too open to observation. It is on one of the other three, although which has yet to be determined. Good as is Inventor Bender's sound detector, he said he was unable to locate the smug-

glers' secret radio station more accurately than to say it was somewhere in that group. He gave me his reasons, but I know so little about radio that I could not follow him well."

"I know a bit about the subject of sound detectors," said Jack. "Although it was not generally known, radio compasses were employed by our forces and by the Allies, too, during the closing years of the war to locate sounds. However, such compasses were not very accurate, and from Inventor Bender's description of his own improved device I received the impression that he had made a great advance.

"Probably," he continued, "Inventor Bender could obtain almost the exact location of the smugglers' radio if he were able to surround the suspected area with sound detectors. The detectors, then, would hunt out the exact hub where the secret radio was in operation. But, if he has brought only one or two detectors into play ——"

"Three," interrupted Inspector Burton, who had followed Jack's explanation with keen interest. "They are at San Francisco, at Ventura, down the coast, and in the Santa Ynez mountains behind Santa Barbara."

"Then," said Jack, "the probability is that, while able to state the secret radio is somewhere in those islands, he cannot say definitely which one. Which

one do you consider the most likely?" he queried, turning to Inspector Burton.

"I have not formed an opinion," he said. "All three are admirably adapted for the purposes of this Chinese-smuggling outfit. They are thirty to fifty miles from shore, unvisited as I said. I believe there is a launch takes occasional sightseers to Santa Cruz, the nearest, from Santa Barbara. But they cannot stray far from the landing place and the island, which is some twenty-seven miles long and five to fifteen miles wide, with a range of mountains all along its length, can keep its secrets without fear of discovery by tourists."

"Isn't it strange we have not caught sight of the trawler, if it was heading for a refuge in those islands?" asked Bob.

Ensign Warwick answered.

"No, the obvious thing for it to do would be to take an opposite course in the fog, stand out to sea, and run in under cover of darkness to-night."

"Moreover," added Inspector Burton, "the smugglers' cove probably is on the seaward side, while we are running down the channel."

"Yes," interrupted Mr. Temple, who had been leaning over the port rail, watching the shore, and conversing with Doctor Marley whom he found a surprisingly good companion when drawn out, "and

we'll soon be in. Boys, go forward and watch the shore and town. I'm delighted now that you have an opportunity to see Santa Barbara, especially from this viewpoint. It is one of the most beautiful cities in the world."

The Sub Chaser had rounded a point of land, and the curving beach of Santa Barbara now came into view. Nearest them was a two-story structure of light-colored stone which Inspector Burton pointed out as the Natatorium.

A little park surrounded the structure and south of it, along the water-front, extended a boulevard flanked by palm trees of noble proportions. Farther down the boulevard, amid a variety of tropical foliage, rose a splendid hotel of huge proportions.

Back from the beach, rising steadily but gently toward the hills in the rear, lay the town, embowered in trees. The foothills were crowned with great houses that, in many cases, amounted to palaces. Behind all lay the mountains of the Santa Ynez range, seeming almost to encircle the town. Everywhere was a profusion of color, red-tiled roofs of houses built in mission style vying with the flame of poinsettias. And over all was a drowsy, somnolent warmth of sunshine under which the town seemed to be taking a siesta.

Only a few bathers were in sight on the sands

before the Natatorium, and Inspector Burton explained that Santa Barbara was a winter resort, rather than a summer one. It was July. Until September, he said, the town would drowse under the summer sun with little activity apparent. Then the wealthy Americans from all parts of the country who maintained homes at Santa Barbara, and at nearby Montecito, would begin to arrive, and the town would resume its winter gaiety.

The boat swung in to a long pier. The beat of the gasoline engines was stilled. The speed slackened until presently the rakish craft came to rest by the side of a floating platform, from which a flight of stairs led to the high pier above. Ropes were thrown which several workmen on the pier seized, and the boat was made fast. Then a little ladder was lowered to the float, and Inspector Burton and Jack made their way ashore. Jack had been commissioned to buy lightweight summer clothes, shirts and shoes and hats for Mr. Temple and his two chums. He promised to return as quickly as possible and, waving a hand in farewell, set off along the pier with the Secret Service man.

He was not long in executing his commissions and returned in a taxicab which rattled out to the pier and was kept waiting while Mr. Temple and the other boys donned the clothing Jack had purchased.

All praised his selections. Then the taxi carried them back uptown to the Victoria Hotel, some distance up State Street, the wide main thoroughfare. Ensign Warwick accompanied them.

There, by pre-arrangement, they were met by Inspector Burton. After lunching, the entire group retired to the sitting-room of Mr. Temple's suite to await the arrival of Inventor Bender, who had been summoned by telephone.

"You boys have been of such tremendous assistance so far," said Inspector Burton, "that the least I can do in return is to let you know what the inventor has discovered. He ought to be here shortly."

Presently from their windows overlooking the park-like grounds of the hotel, they saw a huge, dust-covered automobile roll up to the *porte cochere,* and recognized Inventor Bender beside the chauffeur.

"He made good time down from the mountains," said Inspector Burton, glancing at his watch.

A few moments later the inventor was shown to the sitting room, and entered with an air of triumph and suppressed excitement.

"Well," he cried, without even waiting to exchange greetings, "we have got them."

CHAPTER XX

IN AT THE DEATH

"So THERE you are, Inspector. That's what the Bender sound detector discovered. Human ingenuity could do no more."

Inspector Burton with difficulty repressed a smile at the inventor's childlike vanity. Mr. Temple experienced similar difficulty. Ensign Warwick grew red in the face, and the boys made occasion to bow their heads. In reality, however, nobody need have attempted to hide his feelings, for the inventor was so constituted that he paid his auditors no attention. He was like many geniuses—a supreme egotist.

Those mentioned were seated in Mr. Temple's suite. Doctor Marley alone of the party was not present, having been left aboard the Sub Chaser.

The inventor had spent a considerable space of time relating what had been learned through the medium of the sound detector. From San Francisco he had gone directly to Ventura and, after placing a sound detector in the government radio station at

that point, had turned back to the station on top of the Santa Ynez mountain range behind Santa Barbara. For two days he had been listening vainly in the attempt to catch code messages which might be interpreted as coming from the secret radio station of the smugglers.

Success had come that morning, just after the storm. The heavy fog at sea had not reached to the mountains. It had been sunshiny and bright, and he had taken his listening post at an early hour.

Then, as he tuned his sound detector to varying wave lengths, had come a message in code—a code unlike any of the commercial codes registered with the government and of which he had obtained copies at San Francisco through the offices of Inspector Burton.

He listened. A conversation was being carried on between a ship at sea and a fixed land station. The ship, he now realized must have been the trawler; the station, the secret radio of the smugglers.

It seemed to him the sound detector located the fixed land station south-southeast of Santa Barbara, which would place it somewhere in the group of Channel Islands. This coincided with a bearing communicated from the San Francisco station, which

also had picked up the code messages, and had radioed him at once the line along which they had come. Ventura had not, for some freakish reason, been able to pick up the messages at all.

It was then he had radioed Inspector Burton aboard the Bear, and caused the latter to return.

Later, however, and very recently, in fact, he had gotten information more definite. For, since Inspector Burton had telephoned him to descend from the mountains and confer at the hotel, he had picked up another message in code in which, moreover, occurred the words "Santa Cruz" several times.

"So there you are, Inspector," he said. "That's what the Bender sound detector discovered. Human ingenuity could do no more."

"You certainly have done wonders, Mr. Bender. It is your opinion, then, that the smugglers' radio plant is on Santa Cruz Island?"

"It seems so to me," said the inventor, nodding with vigor.

Inspector Burton was thoughtful. The others remained silent, waiting for him to speak.

"I believe you are correct," he said at length. "Ensign Warwick, what do you say?"

"It certainly looks as if Santa Cruz is the smugglers' hangout."

"And you, Mr. Temple?"

The latter smiled and shook his head.

"I have no opinion one way or the other," he said.

Then Inspector Burton turned to the boys.

"Well, lads," he said. "I have a proposition to make to you. I really believe we have located the smugglers' hangout; that it is on Santa Cruz Island. And, while it is a big island, yet the smugglers' headquarters undoubtedly must be on the seaward side, as I earlier explained, and there are not many places on that rocky shore where a landing could be made.

"I was fortunate on arrival yesterday to get in touch with an old Mexicano, a native of this country, who at one time many years ago tended cattle on Santa Cruz Island when an early-day rancher attempted to maintain a cattle ranch there. He found the grazing too poor to make the venture profitable and gave up his project. This old fellow, whom I located down in the Mexican quarter of the town, gave me much valuable information.

"For one thing, I questioned him closely as to the possibilities for making a landing on the seaward side of Santa Cruz. He said there was only one place really practical, and that was the mouth of a creek near the western extremity of the island. At other places, he said, cliffs descended abruptly to the

sea, and the waves always were high. Boats could not safely land.

"Now, if the smugglers are on Santa Cruz Island that must be their location—up that creek. The ships can stand off shore, while small boats ply back and forth between the ship and the creek, landing the smuggled Chinese coolies. Probably, somewhere up the creek, the smugglers have a number of rude barracks, providing temporary shelter for the Chinese until they can be dispersed to the mainland. Also their radio plant must be up there."

He paused, and Frank eagerly asked the question trembling on the lips of all three chums.

"You said you had a proposition to make us, Inspector?"

The Secret Service man smiled.

"Yes, I have a proposition," he said. "Briefly, would you care to accompany us to-night on an expedition to Santa Cruz?"

"Would we?"

All three expelled the exclamation simultaneously.

Inspector Burton turned to Mr. Temple.

"These boys have shown such ingenuity so far," he said, "and have been of such aid, that I feel I owe it to them to take them along. Of course, they

must have your consent. And I would be delighted to have you with me, too, if you would care to come."

"Not I, thank you," said Mr. Temple, with emphasis. "And I don't know about consenting to your request in regard to the boys. It is very kind of you, and I can see you sympathize with their adventurous inclinations. But, won't it be dangerous? Won't the smugglers put up a stiff fight?"

"There is that possibility, of course," said Inspector Burton. "I believe, however, that when they see the uniforms of Uncle Sam's fighters, and discover an armed vessel of the navy off shore, they will surrender without resistance. Most folks, you know, have a great horror of running foul of the government and its armed forces. Police they might resist, but Uncle Sam's sailors and soldiers overawe them."

"Yes, I believe that is true," said Mr. Temple. "Still——"

"However, Mr. Temple," said the Secret Service man, hastily, "I can sympathize with your anxiety, and if you object I withdraw my invitation to the boys."

"Dad, you have got to let us go," pleaded big Bob. "Why, as Inspector Burton says, there will be little danger. Besides, we aren't babies. We have

taken care of ourselves pretty capably under trying circumstances this summer, haven't we? Now, haven't we?"

He stood above his father as he spoke, having leaped to his feet in his anxiety.

"Yes, you have, Bob," said his father. He put up his hands before him as if for protection, and bent away in mock terror from his big son. "Don't strike. I surrender."

The three chums shouted with delight.

"But, remember," Mr. Temple warned. "I want you to go on this expedition, bearing the same advice the mother gave her daughter. You may 'hang your clothes on a hickory limb, but don't go near the water.' In other words, if there is any fighting, stay out of it. Unless, of course, you are personally attacked, or your side is hard pressed."

"Righto, Dad. We'll remember," said Bob.

"And now, boys," said Inspector Burton, I have my arrangements to make. So, if you will meet me at the pier—or, better, aboard the Sub Chaser—at seven o'clock to-night, I'll excuse myself."

He arose, asking Ensign Warwick to accompany him.

"As for me," said Mr. Temple, when the two officers had left the room, followed by Inventor

Bender, "I'm worn out, and am going to take a nap. You boys have two or three hours of spare time. It would do you all good, in view of your trip to-night, to try to snatch a few hours' sleep. But I suppose it would be impossible for you to compose yourselves?"

"Couldn't be done, Dad," agreed Bob. "We'll go out and look at the town for an hour or so. We can be back around five-thirty, get a bit of dinner, with you, and then go to the boat."

CHAPTER XXI

AT SANTA CRUZ ISLAND

IT WAS early twilight when a taxicab deposited Mr. Temple and the chums at the entrance to the pier. At the suggestion of Inspector Burton, the boys had purchased and donned corduroy trousers. Each carried also a heavy sweater to be worn later against the evening chill, for they had been warned that with the going down of the sun the air would become sharp.

"Pass," said a sailor mounting guard at the big gates which, opened on their arrival, since had been swung across the entrance. "You are expected."

He was one of the men who had been on deck watch earlier aboard the Sub Chaser, and had been placed there because he would recognize them.

Evidently the others of the party already had arrived, for the guard barred the gate and followed them.

"How will I go through the gates when I return," objected Mr. Temple, turning around.

"The pier watchman will see you out, sir," said the sailor, a young fellow, touching his cap.

Struck by the beauty of the scene, the party paused several moments. To the boys it was a revelation. To Mr. Temple, who had visited Santa Barbara in the past, it was a recurring delight. In the west, where the sun only a few moments before had sunk beneath the waters over the shoulder of San Miguel, the sky was yet bright. But behind them deepening twilight lay over the tree-embowered town, while still farther to the east the mountains were in darkness and lights twinkled here and there among the houses in the foothills.

Over all was an atmosphere of peace, of lazy contentment, so much in contrast with the object of their expedition that it was remarked by the sensitive Frank.

"As peaceful as Paradise here," he said. "While out there——" He waved his hand to indicate the west, and paused expressively.

The others looked at the distant islands, humped mountainously like crouching camels against the darkening western sky.

"I wonder what will happen?" said Bob.

"Come on, fellows," added Jack. "No time for fancies. The boat is tooting for us."

They hurried along the pier to the stairway. Mr. Temple did not descend to the float, but remained leaning on the railing. He was inclined to be anxious about the welfare of the boys, but Inspector Burton reassured him.

"I'll see they come to no harm," he said. "And young huskies can't be coddled forever, you know."

"Yes, I realize that," said Mr. Temple. "They are growing up. I know such experiences are good for them, and teach them self-reliance and sharpen their wits in a crisis. That is why I am letting them go. That is why I let them make that wild dash into Mexico, too. Just the same, Inspector, one of the three is my son, and the others are as close as sons to me. And—well, you have to be a father to appreciate it."

"I'm only an old bachelor," said Inspector Burton. "But I think I can understand. Well, good-bye, and rest assured I shall look out for their welfare."

With that, he descended to the boat, which at once forged away from the float. The boys stood at the rail, waving farewell to Mr. Temple until his figure dwindled and was lost to sight in the growing darkness landward.

"Good old Dad," remarked Bob, feelingly, as they at last turned away from the rail and made their

way forward. "He'll be worried about us all the time. But he put his feelings aside, just the same, and let us go."

"He's a peach," said Jack.

"You bet he is," Frank echoed, emphatically.

For some time they stood at the rail forward in silence, each immersed in his own thoughts. But brooding of any sort was foreign to them. And presently they shook off the slight thoughtfulness into which parting with Mr. Temple had thrown them, and began to discuss the possibilities that lay ahead.

Presently Inspector Burton joined them.

"Well, boys," said he in a kindly tone, "not worried about the outcome, are you?"

"Oh, no, sir," answered Frank. "Just talking over what might happen."

"That's right, don't worry," said the Secret Service man. "Probably there will be no fighting. These fellows may not have any force at their hangout to speak of. Perhaps, only the crew of the trawler from which you escaped will be on hand. If we have luck, we can surprise them. And I doubt very much whether they will put up any resistance against Uncle Sam's men."

"How many men have you?" queried Jack.

"Twenty-two in the crew, including Ensign

Warwick, you three, Doctor Marley and myself—twenty-seven in all."

"Doctor Marley?" exclaimed Bob, surprised.

"Yes, he is a peace-loving man," remarked Inspector Burton, with a slight smile. "But I considered it necessary to have a medical man along in case of accident, and persuaded him to come. It was rather difficult, because he fears the anger of 'Black George' if the latter succeeds in laying hands on him. But he consented when I showed him how preposterous it was to expect any real resistance."

"You really expect, sir, that we can locate the smugglers' place in the darkness?" asked Jack.

"Thanks to the sound detector which you boys were instrumental in discovering," said the Secret Service man, "I believe the smugglers are on the island of Santa Cruz. And such being the case, they probably are in one certain spot, as I told you before. But, come into the cabin and I'll show you a map."

He led the way to the tiny cabin, the boys at his heels, and while unrolling a large map of the Channel islands, continued:

"I had hoped, after leaving you this afternoon, to obtain a guide. But the old Mexicano who earlier had told me about the topography of the island, was aghast at the proposal that he should accompany us. He was very superstitious, I could see. Apparently,

he feared some sort of ghost said to roam over the island. I couldn't make much sense of what he said. At any rate, I had to give up the idea of obtaining him as guide, and, as it was too late to look for another, I came off without one. However, I believe we shall have little difficulty making our way. Now, here is the island.

"You see from this map," he continued, "the coastline of the mainland is not north and south here, but almost due east and west. The islands are south of Santa Barbara. Here is Santa Cruz, and this is its northern shore, about twenty-seven miles in length.

"It is on this northern shore that we will land one party, while another slips around West Point, the extremity of the island. The land party will make its way through the hills to the headwaters of this little stream emptying into the ocean on the southern shore. The boat will continue around the extremity of West Point to that stream. Thus we will have the enemy between us."

"You feel that somewhere up that stream the smugglers are located?" asked Bob.

"Yes, and probably near its mouth. The old Mexicano told me the stream broadened out to considerable width, making a small bay in which several schooners could ride."

"And which party will we go with?"

"I think it better for you boys to stay aboard the boat. Ensign Warwick will command the craft, while I will take a party overland."

"Very good, sir," said Jack. "But we're not likely to see much excitement aboard the Sub Chaser, are we?"

Inspector Burton smiled tolerantly, noting the disappointment in Jack's voice.

"Oh, you can't tell," he said, rolling up the map. "You fellows may have all the excitement. But, come, let us go on deck and see where we are. It's a run of only twenty-five or thirty miles to West Point and, as this boat is under forced draught of twenty-four knots an hour, we should be nearing the island. You see, time has been flying. It's almost eight o'clock."

The moon had not yet risen, but the stars were out and a faint afterglow of sunset still lingered in the western sky. Against that sky, ahead, there loomed a huge island with a spine of mountains down the center so lofty as to wring a cry of surprise from the boys.

"I hadn't expected them to be so tall," said Jack.

"Two thousand feet," said Inspector Burton.

The boat altered its course as it approached the land and, with engines muffled, was running west-

ward at reduced speed. Alongshore, the boys could see the ghostly white breaking of the surf.

"Where will we land?" asked Bob. "The mountains seem to come right down to the sea."

"We are rounding Diablo Point in the center of the northern shore now," explained Inspector Burton. "There, ahead, you can see the shore curves inward. Farther ahead, toward West Point on the other side of this little bay, the mountains dwindle out, and there is a sandy shore on which we can land. I'll go ashore with my command and then strike back through the mountains for that stream—a distance of three or four miles.

"Ensign Warwick," he said, turning to the young naval officer, who had joined them in the bow; "after putting us ashore, do you make your way with as little noise as possible around West Point and down the coast to the creek. It should not be difficult to locate.

"Allowing for possible time lost in going astray on our part, we should be pretty near the mouth of the creek two hours after landing. I shall fire three shots in rapid succession when we come up with the enemy. That will be your signal. Do you then make your way into the creek, and seize the trawler or any other craft you find there.

"Have your rapid-firers unlimbered and ready for

action, in case of resistance. And remember to throw your searchlight on shore to light up the scene when I send up a rocket.

"And now, if your small boats are ready, and the men to accompany me selected, I'll say *'au revoir,'* for I can see your pilot is bringing us to, and evidently has singled out the beach where we must land."

Eleven men were set ashore with Inspector Burton, the small boats which carried them returned and were hoisted aboard, and then the Sub Chaser began nosing her way ahead once more.

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE SMUGGLERS' COVE

"Don't know whether I'm cold or just plain scared," said big Bob, laughingly. "But I'm going to put on this sweater, because I'm beginning to shiver."

The others were quick to follow his example.

They stood in the bow of the boat, which long since had rounded West Point and was proceeding very slowly along the southern shore of Santa Cruz Island. An hour and a half had elapsed since Inspector Burton and his party had been set ashore. They were standing close in. And now again the mountains, which around the western extremity of the island had retreated inland, had drawn close to the shore. The mouth of the creek had not yet been sighted by any of those straining their eyes to gaze shoreward.

Ensign Warwick joined the boys, snapping shut the lid of his watch.

"Time's almost up," he said. "Half an hour yet. Surely, we cannot have passed the creek. Inspector

Burton said his information was that it broadened out sufficiently to admit several schooners."

"I've watched every inch of the shore," Jack said. "And I haven't seen it yet. But, look. There." He pointed ahead.

A break appeared in the surf tossing against the foot of the steep cliffs that came down sheer to the shore.

Ensign Warwick stared keenly, then nodded with satisfaction.

"That's the creek, undoubtedly," he said. "Too bad we have to operate without moonlight."

He stepped to the side of the man at the wheel and whispered a low-voiced direction. Then he signaled the engine room. As a result, the pilot swung the wheel over, and the Sub Chaser responded by heading for shore. At the same time, the slow beat of the engines was still further reduced, and the craft proceeded under its headway aided by the drift of the incoming tide.

The farther point of land at the mouth of the creek was low, but a huge rock towered like a guarding tower on the hither side. Atop of it grew several twisted, stunted oak trees. These could plainly be distinguished as the boat slowly drew closer in.

"Deep water, apparently right to the foot of the

rock," said the leadsman in the bow, drawing in the wet string with its knob of lead on the end, and reading the record.

"We'll lay here under shelter of the rock until we hear Inspector Burton's signal," Ensign Warwick told the boys. "On this still night, with no other sounds about, the sound of his shots will carry plainly to our ears."

He was about to give orders to drop the grapnel, when Jack laid a hand on his arm:

"Listen."

The sound of three shots fired in rapid succession came faintly to their ears. It was followed by distant shouts, and then several more shots at ragged intervals, then silence.

"The signal."

"Yes," said Ensign Warwick, springing into instant activity, "and our men are meeting with resistance. We'll have to go in at once."

He turned away to issue the necessary order. In a trice, the rakish craft quivered with the sudden picking-up of the engines, the screw began to revolve with increased violence, her head was put out to sea and she started to run away from shore.

"I suppose we'll go out to where we can get a better view into the creek, and then speed in," said Frank.

The surmise was correct. The boat swung about in a circle, her nose pointed straight for the entrance to the creek eventually, and then they began speeding shoreward again.

A powerful beam of light suddenly shot over their heads, and the boys turned with a gasp. It came from the searchlight mounted on the bridge behind them. They gazed ahead, and saw the light illumine the entrance to the creek. Then something appeared in the rays which caused them to shout simultaneously:

"The trawler."

There it was, the boat on which they had been carried captive from San Francisco, riding at anchor in the cove.

Ensign Warwick approached.

"I decided not to take a chance on running into any craft inside without warning," he said. "That's why I turned on the searchlight. I cannot see a soul aboard the trawler. Can you?"

"Not I," answered Bob.

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

"Well, I'm going to board her. We'll soon find out how matters stand."

The Sub Chaser's speed slackened at a signal once

more, and she slipped alongside the trawler. A rope ladder dangled down the side.

"Fend off, you men, and hold your position," said the young naval officer resolutely. "I'm going aboard. Do six of you follow me."

Seizing the ladder, he clambered up swiftly, revolver in hand, peered over the edge, then swung over the rail and dropped to the trawler's deck.

"All right," he called down. "Not a soul in sight."

Eager to be at his heels, the three chums held back until the six sailors commanded to follow had complied. Then they, too, gained the deck of the trawler. Hurried search revealed the craft was deserted. Not even a watchman had been left aboard. The doors to the cabins they had occupied were locked The boys burst the locks.

With delighted cries they greeted sight of their grips. Quick rummaging disclosed the ring-radio with its appurtenances, which Frank had used to such good effect to discover the proximity of the Sub. Chaser when they were captives aboard the trawler. Nothing had been taken away.

"Locked the doors to keep our stuff from the crew," decided Jack.

On deck, carrying their recovered possessions, they found Ensign Warwick preparing to depart.

"Signs in forecastle and engine room," he said,

"that the crew left in a hurry, and only recently, too. Evidently, they were aboard and were called ashore for some reason. What did you find in the cabin?"

"To tell the truth," admitted Bob, "we didn't look around much. Found our things still aboard, and that occupied our attention. But we can go back and look?"

"No, no. That would be a waste of time. I'm afraid the presence of the land party was discovered, and the crew here went ashore to oppose our men. We'll have to make a landing and go to their aid. Listen."

Again down the wind, and this time only very faintly came the sounds of distant firing. Apparently, the fight was drawing away from them.

Down the ladder to the deck of the Sub Chaser they scrambled. Then, with searchlight playing along the shore, the craft moved slowly up the estuary. Presently, a landing appeared in the rays of the light, jutting out into the stream, a huge shed or barracks at its end ashore. The boat was turned toward it, and slid alongside. Sailors with ropes leaped to the planks of the landing and made fast.

"The place seems deserted," said Ensign Warwick. "Not a sound. But you never can tell. We'll have to take precautions. Wouldn't do to go tearing off this pier, and run smack-dab into a trap."

He turned to the group behind him. Every man aboard the Sub Chaser with the exception of Doctor Marley had followed. The worried face of the fat little physician watched them from the deck.

"Here, you men," he said authoritatively. "Six of you will have to stay aboard the boat. Robbins, Dewart, Murphy, Thompson, Berger and Strunk, you stay behind. Robbins is in charge. Keep the searchlight playing on the shore. Train a rapid firer on the landward end of this pier. Doctor Marley," he called up to the physician, "I presume you will prefer to remain aboard. You boys"—turning to the three chums—"can follow me. You have those revolvers I served out to you?"

They nodded.

"Good. Now, Robbins," he continued, turning to the leader of the party to be left on the boat, "we will make our way up the pier. If we are surprised, we will drop to the ground. Do you at once open with the rapid-firer, shooting high. That ought to be sufficient to rout anybody opposing us. Then leave two men aboard to keep guard against surprise and look after the searchlight, and with your other men charge up the pier. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. If we find nobody about, we shall follow upstream to attempt to join the other party.

In that case, I shall fire three shots as a signal of our intentions. Do you keep the searchlight in play along the pier, with stabs into the sky at five minute intervals as a guide when we return. We may be led far inland. The smugglers may flee to some fastness in the mountains. But do you stay by the ship under any conditions until we return.

"Morgan," he added, turning to one of the men in his party, "here are my keys. "You will find a box of flashlights with extra batteries in my cabin. "Do you and Doniphan go and get a flashlight for each of us with a set of spare batteries. Let's see. That will be nine."

The men sprang to obey with alacrity, and were back on the pier in a very few moments. The flashlights and spare batteries were parcelled out. All was in readiness for the advance.

"The firing has been growing more and more distant," said the young naval officer, turning to Jack who stood beside him. "Doesn't it seem so to you?"

"Yes, it does," said Jack. "For several minutes now I have not heard a shot, and the last was very faint."

"From the look of things aboard the trawler, the deserted appearance ashore, and those receding sounds, I suspect the smugglers fled with our friends

in pursuit," said Ensign Warwick. "Perhaps, however, they hoped to drive them off, and the crew of the trawler was called ashore to help. If that is the case, our men may be hard pressed. Come, we have taken all the precautions possible here. Let's go."

And with Jack beside him, Bob and Frank close behind and the sailors pressing on their heels, the young naval officer started up the pier.

CHAPTER XXIII

A SIGNAL FROM THE RADIO STATION

No SIGNS of life were apparent as the glare of the searchlight played over the great building, resembling a dock shed in appearance, which bulked on shore at the end of the pier and slightly to one side of it.

No other buildings could be seen, nothing but the steep slope of a summer-browned hill, as, obedient to instructions, Robbins swept the rays of the searchlight over the surroundings.

"Nothing but that great warehouse," said Ensign Warwick to Jack.

"That building seems to me proof positive that this is headquarters for smugglers of Chinese coolies," said Jack. Probably 'Black George' housed them there before distributing them to the mainland. The boats from Mexico could run in here at night, discharge their coolies into that barracks, and nobody would be the wiser."

An exclamation from Frank drew their attention.

"Look there."

All gazed in the direction in which Frank pointed. On a shoulder of the hill behind the barracks, full in the glare of the searchlight, stood revealed a radio plant and antenna. Whoever aboard the Sub Chaser was operating the searchlight kept it fixed several minutes on this novel object.

"Not a sign of life there, either," commented the naval officer. "If anybody is around here, he's laying mighty low."

They were close now to the barracks. Long, low, solid-walled with not a window in the sides but with traps in the roofs to admit light and air, it bulked before them—dark, mysterious, forbidding.

At that moment the searchlight ceased its wandering, and the powerful glare came to rest full on the huge sliding doors barring the nearer end. Ensign Warwick turned and held up a hand to indicate he wanted the light kept in that position.

"I hear something," whispered Bob.

All stood immobile and silent, straining to hear. Distinctly there came to their ear a sibilant, whispering sound. It was from the barracks.

"Get out of the light," whispered Ensign Warwick. "Half to each side of the door."

He divided his forces, and all took up their positions. He motioned Bob and the sailor called Doniphan to him.

"You two are the strongest," he whispered. "That door isn't locked. You can see it is in two halves that roll back. Each of you push back one side, being careful to keep the door between yourselves and the interior. We'll crouch on the sides. ready for action if there is anybody within. The searchlight will play right through the doorway and light up the interior. Ready? Then, let's go."

Bob and Doniphan obediently set their shoulders and forearms against the great beams lacing the front of the doors. The latter swayed slightly, then gave. Steadily the two young fellows pushed back the doors, and the light struck through into the dark interior.

A moaning sound went up that rose and rose into an eerie shriek. The hair of the listeners stood on end. Frank and Jack crouching to one side leaned against each other instinctively.

"What's that?"

Bob and Doniphan now had succeeded in pushing the doors fully open. Bob joined his chums who were on his side of the door, Doniphan his comrades on the other. The powerful glare of the searchlight illumined the whole interior. It fell on a huddled group of men in the middle of the great barracks, whose frightened faces shone white and pale in the light. It was from them rose the shriek.

They were Chinese.

"Coolies. Smuggled coolies, as I live," exclaimed Ensign Warwick, "and scared stiff."

No wonder. With those doors opening so mysteriously, that strange light coming from the darkness, brighter than the noonday sun, searching out every nook of the interior, and with not a human being in sight, it was no wonder, indeed, that the ignorant coolies were frightened.

"Poor devils," commented the naval officer to Jack. "I have nothing against them. They are good enough fellows in their own surroundings, but have been made the pawns of these smugglers."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to try to talk to them. Do the rest of you line up on each side of the doorway."

With that he stepped into the open.

"Who speaks English?" he called clearly.

The big group swayed a little, as if its members were ready to fly apart and break into flight. In a moment a Chinaman in civilian clothes, as distinguished from the sort of convict's uniform of dark blue pants and blouse worn by the others, stepped a pace or two forward. He moved unwillingly, but evidently was awed by the appearance of the naval officer in uniform.

"Me speakee Englis," he said. "Me Cholly Lung."

"All right, Charley Lung. I am an officer of the Navy. Out there is a great big warship. You keep these men quiet and nothing will happen to them. But if they make trouble the cannon will blow this building to pieces. You understand? You tell them that."

"Me unnastan.' Me tell 'em."

A quick jabber in Chinese followed, as Charley Lung faced his unfortunate compatriots.

"Allee boy sclared," Charley Lung declared, facing about. "No maken tlouble. What shall do?"

"Send each man to his bunk. Tell them to stay there."

Again the quick patter of Chinese on Charley's part. The coolies, some fifty in number, scampered away, diving headlong into the bunks lining the walls. Then the Ensign beckoned Charley Lung to him authoritatively. He asked him a quick series of questions as to the whereabouts of "Black George," his assistants and the crew of the trawler. Charley looked bland. To every question he answered monotonously.

"Me no unnastan.' Me no unnastan.' "

"Very well," said Ensign Warwick grimly. "You come with me. I think you do know."

Turning to Doniphan, he said:

"Doniphan, mount guard here. Get a rifle from the boat. We'll wait until you return. Tell Robbins to keep the searchlight playing in here, and explain why."

Doniphan was back in a very short time.

"Now," said Ensign Warwick. "We'll take up the trail. I haven't heard a sound for some time. But somewhere up that creek Inspector Burton's party has met the enemy, and we must go to the rescue."

Turning to the Chinaman, he said:

"Charley, you are interpreter here. Don't deny it. You know where 'Black George' and his party have gone. And you know the road to follow. You have been violating the laws of this country and you are in my power now. If you do what I say, it may be easier for you later. Now I want you to lead the way."

Charley Lung looked at him through slitted eyes. There was not a trace of expression on his face to show that he understood or that he feared.

"A' light," he said. "Come along dlis way."

He struck off at once at a tangent from the barracks, bending his steps along a narrow trail following the creek into a canyon between high hills. The

others followed, Ensign Warwick gripping Charley by an arm.

The three chums were at the rear of the procession. As the others dimly seen in the darkness turned a bend in the trail and disappeared up the canyon, Jack chanced to look back. The searchlight still shot steadily, a golden bar of light athwart the darkness and accentuating it by contrast. In its rays the barracks stood out clear-cut as an etching, with the figure of Doniphan, the sentry, before the door. But Jack's keen eyes saw something else, and he gripped his companions' arms and pointed upward.

Their gaze followed. Gradually their eyes picked out the dim bulk of the radio station seen earlier in the glare of the searchlight. But what had alarmed Jack? They could see nothing.

"There. That light. There it is again."

Through a window in the end wall of the station blinked a light, once, twice, thrice. Then all was dark again.

"Signal," said Jack with conviction. "Somebody's up there."

"Come on, let's find out," said the impetuous Frank, starting forward.

Jack restrained him.

"Better tell Ensign Warwick."

Without a word, Bob turned and darted away up the trail. He was back in five or six minutes.

"Can't see them," he said, "they must have left the trail and struck off at an angle somewhere. I used my flashlight, too, but couldn't see a soul.

"Very well," said Jack. "Then there's nothing else for it. We can't let that light go unchallenged. We'll have to investigate ourselves. Come on."

The three chums started picking their way among the loose stones, up the side of the hill, in the darkness.

CHAPTER XXIV

A SPY CAPTURED

"I HAVEN'T seen any further flashes, Jack. Have you?"

"No, Frank. Bob, what do you make of it?"

"Well, you know more about radio than we. As far as I know, that light wasn't any indication that the radio was in use, because there is no such indication possible."

"You're right, of course, Bob. That light was a signal to somebody somewhere. I wonder ——"

"What?" asked Frank.

"Whether it was a signal to some ship off shore?"

"Or to the smugglers who are inland," suggested Frank.

"It might have been the latter," said Jack. "I hadn't thought of that. Let's see whether this hilltop commands a view up the canyon."

They had paused beside a clump of rocks some thirty feet from the nearest corner of the radio station, after toiling up the steep slope. They spoke in whispers. Not a sign of life was apparent about the

station, yet they could not have been deceived regarding the appearance of the lights, ere starting to climb upward. What did it mean? It was this they had been discussing, and now, at Jack's suggestion, they faced about. A smothered exclamation broke from Jack's lips:

"Why, this hilltop must be in sight for miles."

Even in the moonless darkness, it was apparent that such was, indeed, the case. The winding canyon, up which had disappeared Ensign Warwick and his relief party going to the aid of Inspector Burton in his fight with the smugglers, was commanded for a long distance by this outjutting hill on which the radio station had been erected. Two rows of hills, shadowy, bulking in the darkness, stretched ahead on either side and the canyon lay between.

"Fellows, our arrival and landing was watched," whispered Frank, with conviction. "Then when Ensign Warwick set out with his men, the spy signaled from here by means of a light. And so the smugglers were informed and forewarned."

"Yes," said Bob suddenly, "and say ——"

The big fellow did not often speak, but when he did it was usually to the point. Bob and Jack looked at him.

"Say what?" asked Jack.

"Why, that Chinaman Charley Lung. I'll bet he's in on it. He's leading our men into a trap."

"I believe you've guessed it, Bob," said Frank, his low voice taking on increased excitement. "Remember how he looked?"

"Looked like a heathen idol to me," grunted Bob. "What do you mean?"

"Oh, a kind of sly look in his eye, and something sly in his voice, too. 'All light,' he said. 'Come 'long.' I tell you, now that Bob has suggested it, I believe that Chinaman was planning to play the traitor, and lead Ensign Warwick into an ambush."

For several seconds all three crouched there beside the rocks, thinking. And their thoughts were not of the pleasantest. Their party was split. Inspector Burton with one force was somewhere inland engaged with the smugglers. Perhaps he had encountered a large force, and was hard pressed. Certainly, the sound of firing had grown more and more distant until it could no longer be heard, and that seemed to indicate he was being beaten back.

Then there was Ensign Warwick with the second force. And, if their surmise was correct, the smugglers had been informed by signal from the radio plant that he was coming, and Charley Lung, moreover, was leading the naval force into a trap.

"What could they do? What could they do?"

That was the question in each mind. Instinctively, as always in a crisis, the others turned to Jack.

"First of all," said Jack, "we have got to find who is in the radio station, and capture him. It won't do to leave an enemy in our rear."

"What if there is more than one," objected Frank.

"Not likely," said Jack. "One man to spy and give the signal would be sufficient. More would be a waste of men."

"All right. Let's go," said Bob. When action was suggested, he always was ready for it.

Jack considered.

"Listen. We want to be careful, and not run unnecessary risks. It's just a little box of a station with a window in this end nearest us, a door there in front, and probably a window on the other end. I think that window is too small for a man to escape through, don't you?"

The boys agreed.

"Big enough for pigeons," commented Bob. "That's about all."

"Well, see what you think of my plan. We'll creep up to the door, and crouch to each side of it, then knock and call on whoever is within to come out and surrender.'"

Bob and Frank considered.

"Sounds all right to me," said Frank.

"Why not break right in?" grumbled Bob.

Jack shook his head.

" Best to be cautious," he said. "Let's go."

Slowly and with infinite care so as not to dislodge loose stones and set them rolling down the hillside or to make any betraying sound, the boys crept to their chosen positions, Bob and Frank on one side of the door, Jack on the other. The revolvers served out to them by Ensign Warwick were held ready. Not a sound from within. Was their presence known or suspected?

Jack leaned forward and thumped on the door with the butt of his weapon.

"Come out," he called in a clear, firm voice, "in the name of the United States Navy I call on you to surrender. Your light was seen from the warship, and the station is surrounded."

A moment's silence followed. The hearts of the boys beat so strongly it seemed to them the very sound must be heard in that tense stillness. Then the boards of the floor creaked under a light tread, and the door was slowly pulled inward.

"Don't shoot," said a voice. "I surrender."

A slender form appeared in the doorway, hands upraised. Jack shot the rays of his flashlight upward. A Chinese youth in American clothes appeared. He was spectacled.

"Are you alone?" demanded Jack.

"Yes, sir."

"Armed?"

"Yes, sir."

"Advance and be searched."

The youth stepped across the low sill of the station, hands still upraised. Jack motioned to Frank to search him, and the latter ran his hands over the other's form, abstracting a revolver and a long knife.

"That all?"

"Yes, sir."

Bob spun the young Chinaman around, pulled out his belt and tied his hands together with it.

"Keep an eye on him," said Jack. 'I'm going to have a look at the station."

First casting the rays of his flashlight over the interior and verifying the Chinaman's statement that he was alone, Jack went inside. Presently Bob and Frank heard him exclaim, and then he appeared in the doorway lugging a heavy square wooden box.

"Look what I found," he cried delightedly. "A portable radio outfit for field work. This is the very latest equipment. I've examined it hastily, and it seems to have everything—antennae coiled up and ready for stringing, some jointed steel poles to attach it to the box and powerful storage batteries."

"What'll we do with it?" asked Bob.

"I don't know yet, but I have a hunch it will come in handy. Well, now I guess we better go down to the boat and tell this man Robbins what we have discovered and what we suspect. Then we can talk to our prisoner, too."

The latter's face was impassive. In appearance and judging by the choice of words he had employed, he was an educated youth. Perhaps something could be gotten out of him by questioning. It was worth trying.

"All right," said Bob. "Frank, you watch our prisoner and I'll lend Jack a hand with this radio outfit."

CHAPTER XXV

A FORLORN HOPE

"Wow. Now that we're down, I don't see how we made it with this."

Bob put down his end of the box containing the portable radio transmission set, and Jack followed suit.

"Must weigh all of two hundred pounds," said Bob.

"Well, the batteries are heavy," said Jack. "The light poles weigh little, and the coil contains not much more than a pound of wire. But there are eight 'B' batteries of twenty-two and one-half volts each, and they weigh about five pounds apiece."

"Don't see what use the darned contraption will be, anyhow," grumbled Bob. "Where can we use it?"

"Oh, I don't know. But I have a hunch it will come in handy. Come on."

Bob took up his end of the case, and the march was resumed. They had reached the base of the

hill and were at the rear of the warehouse. Skirting this, they were halted by a sharp challege as they reached the front and stepped into the glare of the searchlight from the Sub Chaser.

"All right, Doniphan," said Jack. "We've got a prisoner."

The young sailor doing sentry duty in front of the building housing the Chinese coolies regarded them curiously, as they made their way out the pier toward the boat. Robbins, the petty officer left in charge with a half-dozen men felt his responsibility and was on watch on deck. He hailed them, then leaped to the pier. The boys paused, Jack and Bob put down their burden, and briefly Jack related their experiences.

"So you were signallin', hey?" said Robbins sharply, turning to the young Chinaman whom the boys had taken prisoner.

"He had a powerful electric light bulb hung in the window of the radio station," explained Jack. "It could be seen a long distance up the canyon.

"No un'stan'," said the Chinaman, a look of stolid stupidity coming over his face.

Jack recalled the good English employed when the youth had been called on to surrender.

"Oh, come, now," he said. "We know better than that. You're an educated man."

The Chinaman shrugged. Stupidity gave way to defiance.

"Have it your own way," he said. "But I won't tell you a thing."

Robbins was exasperated. He made a threatening gesture, but Jack laid a hand on his arm.

"All right," said Robbins, grinning. "I wouldn't strike him, anyhow. Against regulations. Wait a minute, you fellows, till I turn him over to somebody aboard."

Taking the prisoner by an arm, he marched him to the rail of the Sub Chaser, where a sailor who had been an interested observer to what went forward, was leaning. Returning, Robbins, not much older in appearance than Bob but of slighter build, said:

"What's to be done?"

He respected the boys for their quick thinking and courage in emergencies, and deferred to them. All four looked at each other in silence. It was a ticklish situation for young heads.

"Ensign Warwick told you not to leave the boat, didn't he?" asked Jack.

Robbins nodded.

"It probably would be foolish for all of us to go chasing off up the canyon without knowing any more than we do, anyhow," said Jack.

"Look here, you fellows," said Frank. "What's

the matter with our going scouting up the trail, the three of us? We know there is danger ahead and have a pretty good idea of what it is, and so we ought to be able to guard against it. Three men would make a likely reinforcement in case we find our friends hard-pressed."

"Yes, but nine men would be better," said Robbins. "If there was only some way you could send back word, in case you find our men bottled up, I could bring up my outfit."

"Well, I can run back," said Jack.

"He's some jackrabbit, too," Frank assured the young sailor. "You ought to see him in our school field meets."

"Yes, but suppose you get five or six miles inland," objected Robbins. "You couldn't be back here in under an hour, and it would be more than double that time before we could get there with help."

Big Bob looked thoughtful. Then he kicked against the side of the portable radio outfit at their feet.

"If only this weren't so doggone heavy," he said, "we might carry it with us, and give you a call when we discover anything."

"I have it," cried Jack delightedly. "The very thing."

"What?" asked Robbins.

"Why, we can take that portable radio without any trouble at all. This creek runs back a considerable distance into the mountains through the canyon. We can set up the radio in a boat and go up stream that way. The trail is bound to parallel the stream. Moreover, we stand a better chance to proceed unobserved, for they will be watching the trail and not the stream."

"Why not?" said Frank. "Looks like a good idea to me."

"All right," said Robbins, "if you fellows want to try it. Here's a boat right here, tied to the pier. Let's rig her up."

Everybody worked enthusiastically, and the portable radio apparatus was quickly in place, except for the aerial.

"There's not sufficient stretch for the aerial," said Jack. "But if we do get a chance to use the radio to call you, we can string the antennae to some trees in no time at all, make our connections, and be all fixed. I should say this would send about eight or ten miles."

Frank steering, and Bob and Jack at the oars, the boat shot away upstream and almost immediately disappeared from sight, so dark was the night. Robbins listened intently, but the beat of the oars soon died down.

"Expert oarsman," he commented to himself. "Wonder who those fellows are, anyhow? They certainly act in a hurry."

Then he went aboard to caution one of his men to remain at the radio, ready to catch the boys' message should they call.

Meantime with oars so skilfully handled as to make scarcely any sound, the boys forged upstream. Minute after minute flew by, without a shot, or any human sound, breaking the stillness. Bend after bend was cautiously rounded, but nothing lay ahead. Several times Frank looked at his watch. An hour had passed.

"We must have come three or four miles," he whispered. "Let's take a breather. I'll spell Jack when we go on. Pull in under this left bank. The trail is on the right side, and we'll keep away from it."

Bob and Jack pulled slowly over as Frank swung the tiller, and the boat came to rest beneath the drooping branches of a pepper tree that grew on the very edge of the stream.

"I'm afraid we can't go much further in the boat," Jack said anxiously, his voice barely audible. "Stream's getting very shallow."

"Suppose one of us pushes ahead to reconnoiter while the others stay in the boat," suggested Frank.

"I expect that's what we better do," said Jack. "It's getting quite shallow."

After some further whispered conversation it was decided that while one of the trio to be chosen by lot should push ahead on foot, the others should busy themselves stringing the aerial.

"If I find out anything to tell Robbins," said Frank, who had been the one selected to spy out the land, "the radio will be working when I come back."

Scarcely had he stepped ashore on the left bank than the sound of revolver fire, ahead and seemingly close at hand, was heard. Frank jumped back into the boat.

"Put me ashore on the other side," he said. "I'll go up the trail. That shooting can't be far away."

"Be careful," warned Jack, anxiously, as his young chum again leaped ashore.

A quarter of an hour passed, during which Jack and Bob busied themselves stringing the aerial between two trees on opposite sides of the stream. They stopped work frequently to listen. One more burst of firing was heard, and a faint sound of shouting. Then Frank's voice hailed them, and he scrambled aboard.

"Nobody along the trail," he explained as soon as he could recover breath, for he had been running. "But around the bend ahead the canyon broadens

out into a rather wide valley, and up above it on a hilltop on the right is a stockade. Our men are in there, and the smugglers are besieging them. The way I could tell the smugglers are outside was by blundering almost on top of a clump of Chinamen directed by 'Black George.' "

"Guess we better radio Robbins to come up with his men," said Jack. "Bob and I just completed stringing the aerial. Now to see if the outfit will transmit."

He began adjusting the tuner and detector knobs and sending out his signal.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SURPRISE ATTACK

"I HEAR someone coming," whispered Bob.

While Jack continued working at the radio, Bob and Frank listened intently. Jack began speaking into the transmitter, indicating he had opened communication with the Sub Chaser. Bob put a hand on his arm, and set his lips to Jack's ear.

"Tell 'em to wait," he whispered. "Someone coming. Mustn't risk being overheard."

Nodding, Jack breathed an injunction to wait into the transmitter. All three chums sat silent and tense. The faint sound first noticed by Bob grew louder. Footsteps were approaching along the trail. Not those of one man but of a number. Fortunately, the bank of the stream was high and they were sheltered below it. Besides, down here at the bottom of the canyon, with the narrow walls not far from the stream on either hand, it was dark as a wolf's mouth. Even to each other they were almost undistinguishable thickenings in the gloom.

The footsteps came closer. They could hear men

passing on the trail above. Frank, who was nearest, suddenly swung ashore. Bob divined he was going to clamber up to watch the trail, and considered it a risky proceeding. He put out a hand to stop Frank, but too late.

Not even daring to whisper, Bob and Jack held their places in the boat and watched Frank's figure melt silently into the darkness.

Presently the sound of men passing ceased. Not a word had been uttered among them that Bob and Jack could overhear. Nor had the chums ventured to speak to each other. What had become of Frank? Bob looked at his watch with the illuminated dial. Ten or twelve minutes had passed. There was no longer any sound on the trail above. He could stand the suspense just about three minutes more, he whispered to Jack, and then he, too, would take the trail to see what had become of Frank.

He was preparing to put his plan into execution when Frank reappeared, swinging down the bank with less precaution than before and obviously in a state of high excitement.

"Fellows, that was 'Black George' and his engineer and nearly a score of Chinese," he said. "They're moving fast down the canyon. Matt Murphy and a handful of men have been left behind. I overheard 'Black George' and his engineer in whispered con-

versation, and I gathered what their plan is. I was crouching in a tree up here above the trail. Their plan is for Matt Murphy and his gang to keep our men bottled up in the stockade, while 'Black George' goes down to try to surprise and capture the Sub Chaser."

"Evidently Ensign Warwick's Chinese guide was a traitor all right," said Jack.

"First thing, Jack, is to radio Robbins and warn him what's coming," suggested Bob.

"Right," said Jack, and turned to comply.

Frank again swung up to the trail to guard against surprise while Jack telephoned. At the conclusion of his conversation, Jack called to him in a low voice and Frank returned to the boat.

"Robbins suggests that we attack Matt Murphy and his party from the rear," he said. Murphy cannot have many men left, probably merely enough to keep dropping a shot now and then and lead our men in the stockade to believe all 'Black George's' men still face them. If we open vigorous fire from different quarters it will seem to Matt's men that reinforcements have arrived to attack them in the rear and they may make a break to get away. Moreover, the sound of the firing will induce our fellows to come out of the stockade. Shall we try it?"

"I'm game," said Bob.

"Me, too," declared Frank, ungrammatically.

"One thing we must all remember, however," Jack said firmly. "That is, not to take chances. Keep a considerable distance from the enemy. We don't want to shoot any of them, but merely to frighten them into withdrawing."

"All right," said Bob, impatient for action. "Come on."

Examining their revolvers by flashlight to see that all was in order, the boys scrambled ashore with Frank in the lead, as he had acquired a familiarity with the route. The boat was tied securely to the bank.

Walking in Indian file, they proceeded along the trail to the bend earlier described by Frank. Rounding it, they saw open before them the valley of which Frank also had spoken. Although there was no moon, their eyes were accustomed to the darkness, and by the pale light of the stars they could see sufficiently well to gain a good idea of their surroundings.

The valley broadened out to the width of, perhaps, half a mile. Close to them on the left was the hill crowned by the stockade. This hill, bare of verdure and low, jutted up from the floor of the valley and independent of the higher hills behind it. The posts

of the stockade made a serrated line against the clear night sky.

"Murphy's men must be close at hand," Bob whispered.

"It was right here that I almost stumbled on them before," answered Frank, low-voiced. "We must be careful."

"Look there. I saw someone moving," said Jack, gripping Bob's arm, and pointing ahead.

They stood pressed against the canyon wall, trying to pierce the darkness. Everything was so shadowy and unreal, however, that Frank's gaze following where Jack indicated could make nothing of it, nor could Bob discern anything to indicate the presence of the enemy. At that moment Matt Murphy's voice raised in a guarded hail came from the shadows in the direction to which Jack had pointed.

"Who's there? That you Mac?"

Murphy believed one of "Black George's" party had returned. Probably, from the name he employed, he considered it was MacFinney, the engineer. Jack thought quickly

"Down. Crouch down, and scatter," he whispered.

Frank and Bob dropped and disappeared to right and left respectively in the low brush. Murphy called again, a note of anxiety in his voice:

"Who's there? Answer or I'll fire."

Jack's reply was a shot from his revolver, purposely aimed high. He had no desire to injure Murphy. Then he ran to one side, fired again, and a third time and then taking shelter behind a rock awaited developments. Bob and Frank who, it had been agreed beforehand, should go not more than twenty paces away in order that they all might keep in touch with each other in case it was necessary to come together again for protection or make a dash back to the boat, also opened fire.

Murphy fired only once, after Jack's first shot. The bullet pinged against the canyon wall. Then he turned and, although the boys could not see him, they could hear him dashing back, and surmised he was going to rejoin his men.

Jack decided a little noise now would not come amiss and would help to increase the alarm and mystification of Murphy's party as well as apprise their own men in the stockade that friends were at hand. He began to yell "Attaboy, give it to 'em." Bob and Frank, closer at hand than he thought, joined in vociferously. They made a praiseworthy din that would have done credit to a dozen men at least.

In the midst of it, answering cheers came back from the stockade and then over the palings leaped

Ensign Warwick and Inspector Burton with their men. The boys could not see, but they could hear. Shots and cheers rang out, and the boys not to be outdone redoubled their former efforts, at the same time keeping up a brisk revolver fire at the sky.

It was too much for Matt Murphy and the half-dozen Chinese left in his charge. Their only thought one of escape, they bolted for the trail down the canyon. A surprised grunt from Bob indicated that one of the fleeing Chinese had blundered into him. Bob landed a blow on the side of the fellow's head that was sufficient. It bowled the man over, and Bob leaped forward and sat on him.

Frank saw a dark form scuttle along near him and, unwilling to fire, picked up a stone half as big as his fist and let fly with it. The missile caught the fugitive behind the ear and he, too, went down. Frank ran forward and bent over the still form. By the bandaged arm, he could tell it was Murphy.

Alarmed, he bent closer. But Murphy was breathing heavily. He had merely been knocked out. Frank stood over him undecided what to do. A voice hailed from the darkness:

"Where are you, Frank?"

Frank called, and Jack came up.

"Hello, you've got a prisoner, too. Why, it's

Murphy. Bob also captured a man, a Chinese. Four or five others ran by me and hit the trail."

A hail from the darkness ahead in Ensign Warwick's voice came to their ears:

"Where are you, Robbins?"

"It's not Robbins, sir," answered Jack. "But Jack Hampton. My chums are with me."

"Thank God," cried the young naval officer, running forward, and while still some paces away. "So you three fellows are safe? I didn't miss you until we arrived here, and then things happened so rapidly I couldn't go back to look for you. What happened? But, wait, here's Inspector Burton."

The Secret Service man approached, throwing the glare of his flashlight over the boys. A number of the sailors closed around them. Others who had followed the fugitives a short distance along the trail but had turned back, according to orders to stick together, could be seen approaching. A number of flashlights lighted up the scene.

"Why, you're wounded," said Jack, glancing at a blood-stained handkerchief bound about the Secret Service man's forehead.

"A nasty crack, but nothing dangerous," replied Inspector Burton. "But where in the world did you boys drop from? Ensign Warwick thought you lost or captured."

"And where is Robbins? I thought it was he attacking, and that's why we left the stockade," supplemented the naval officer.

Briefly as possible, Jack recounted their adventures, interrupted frequently by expressions of approval and warm commendation from Ensign Warwick and Inspector Burton. The boys wanted to know what had happened to the other two parties, but Ensign Warwick said:

"That story will have to wait. Meantime, if we hurry we can get to the landing almost as soon as 'Black George.' Leave the boat tied up and come with us. You can make better time."

CHAPTER XXVII

BLACK GEORGE CAPTURED

MURPHY and the captured Chinese were bound and put aboard the boat. But first Robbins was apprised. "Black George" had not appeared yet. No time was wasted detaching the aerial. It was abandoned. Then one of the sailors, who had been shot in the fleshy part of the right leg and thus could not maintain the rapid pace of the party, was put at the oars with instructions to follow down stream until he reached the landing.

With that the others set out at a trot. All were young and active, even Inspector Burton being still in his thirties and in excellent physical condition. They were unencumbered with baggage of any sort.

Ensign Warwick in the lead set a killing pace. Jack, Bob and Frank, however, thanks to their training in long-distance running at Harrington Hall, were enabled to keep up without difficulty. Inspector Burton surprised them all by sticking close.

"I've always been a bit of a runner," he explained

during one three-minute halt for the recovery of breath.

So hard did Ensign Warwick push forward that in half an hour they neared the mouth of the canyon where it broadened out into the little landlocked harbor. A halt was called. Not a shot had been heard yet.

"Those Chinese we routed," whispered Ensign Warwick, "would give the alarm that we are behind them if they caught up with 'Black George.'"

"Perhaps they took to the hills," suggested Jack. Inspector Burton nodded.

"It might easily be that they had a stomachful of fighting," he said. "They might have decided to save their own skins and let 'Black George' shift for himself."

"But if they have given warning, we might be ambushed," said Frank. "A little way ahead there, at the mouth of the canyon, would be a fine place for an ambuscade."

A distant sound of firing, followed by a pandemonium of high-pitched yells, shattered the silence.

"They're attacking," cried Ensign Warwick. "Come on. Ambush or not, we must go forward. Every man for himself and watch the sides of the canyon. On the run now, fellows. Let's go."

Turning he plunged ahead. Behind him came

Inspector Burton and the three chums. Close on their heels were the fifteen or eighteen young sailors.

There was no ambush after all, and they later learned the Chinese they had routed at the stockade had fled to the hills without seeking to warn "Black George" of the Nemesis on his heels.

Dashing out of the canyon, around the sharp turn at its mouth, they came upon a wild scene. The Chinese coolies in the warehouse were shrieking in terror, and the sounds of their yells and of the blows they rained wildly upon the sides of the building came clear to their ears. They could see three crouching figures before the door, rifles presented, guarding against any attempt of the coolies to bolt.

The searchlight from the Sub Chaser played over the scene a moment longer as they watched, bringing it out in sharp relief. Then the light was swung away and brought to bear upon the trawler. "Black George" appeared on the deck, firing his revolver futilely at the Sub Chaser.

Ensign Warwick running rapidly reached the pier, with the boys close at his heels. He dashed out to the Sub Chaser and leaped aboard.

"Beggars must have gotten into the warehouse from the roof," Robbins explained rapidly to his superior officer. "Stirred the coolies up to make a break for it, thinking to divert us. Would have

done so, too, if I hadn't had your warning. But we kept the coolies in bounds. Meantime, the rest of their outfit must have swam out to the trawler. Planned to set her adrift, I guess. Tide's running out. Heard something that made me suspicious and put the light on them, as you see. And here you are."

"Good enough," approved Ensign Warwick.

Advancing to the other side of his little craft he called to "Black George" to surrender.

"If you try to escape," he called, "I'll train a machine gun on you. Better surrender and avoid bloodshed."

With a curse of rage, "Black George" raised his revolver and fired. Ensign Warwick leaped aside, as the bullet struck the deck at his feet. A shot rang out from the Sub Chaser. The revolver spun from "Black George's" grasp, and he jumped up and down grasping the stunned wrist in his other hand.

"Who did that?" queried the naval officer.

"I did, sir," said Jack. "I merely shot his weapon away to disarm him."

"Pretty shot," approved Ensign Warwick, while several of the sailors also murmured approval.

"Folwell, a machine gun is trained on your deck and you cannot escape," the naval officer continued. "Our men are waiting ashore, and you cannot escape

by swimming. Call your men on deck. A boarding party is coming aboard."

"Black George" realized the futility of further resistance, and when Ensign Warwick with a half-dozen heavily armed men gained the deck of the trawler he had Engineer MacFinney and eighteen Chinese on deck. They were searched, and then the Chinese were put in the forecastle under guard and the two white men were taken aboard the Sub Chaser.

At sight of the three chums, "Black George" cursed bitterly.

"You're the cause of all my troubles," he said. "I should have left you to the tender mercies of Wong Ho's men back in Chinatown."

"If he only knew how much you three lads have contributed to his downfall," commented Inspector Burton, as "Black George" was led away, "he would feel even worse."

Ensign Warwick approached.

"Look here," he said, kindly, "you fellows have had a pretty strenuous time of it. It's a mild night, and I'm going to keep Folwell aboard here, bed him down in a hammock, where I can watch him. Do you fellows object to turning in on the trawler?"

"Not at all," said Jack. "We slept there before, you know."

"Yes, I know. That's why I proposed it now.

Well, if you want to turn in now, I've got the boat ready to lift you over."

Amid a hail of "good-nights" the three chums and Inspector Burton were rowed to the trawler. Once aboard, they lost no time in straightening the bunks and tumbling in.

"Way past midnight now," said Bob, examining his watch. "We've got only a few hours. I, for one, am not going to waste them in undressing."

And, merely kicking off his shoes, he tumbled over on his berth and almost immediately fell asleep. The others followed suit.

CHAPTER XXVIII

REWARDS AHEAD

MR. TEMPLE beamed on the gathering in his sitting room at the Victoria Hotel. It was the afternoon of the following day. The party included the three chums and Inspector Burton. Ensign Warwick had duties demanding his attention. Inventor Bender and Doctor Marley had left for San Francisco.

"Well, boys, I can't tell you how relieved I am at the safe outcome of your adventures," declared Mr. Temple. "I was worried. There's no denying it. When you left last evening for Santa Cruz Island, everybody said there would be no danger and that the smugglers would submit without a fight. But I had a premonition of trouble. Besides," he added, twinkling, "I knew that where there was trouble, you three youngsters would be sure to be in it."

"They were in it, indeed," said Inspector Burton. "If it hadn't been for them, I don't know how matters would have turned out. Having isolated us in the stockade, the smugglers might have captured the Sub Chaser. Anything might have happened."

The boys stirred uncomfortably under this praise.

"Inspector Burton, won't you tell us now how you and Ensign Warwick came to be in the stockade?" asked Jack, to divert the conversation. "So far you have been busy with other matters, and we haven't heard the story yet."

"Yes, I meant to tell you as we crossed from Santa Cruz this morning, but the questioning of the prisoners kept me so engaged it was impossible. Folwell wouldn't talk, but that man, Matt Murphy, gave me much valuable information."

"He's a pretty good scout," said Frank thoughtfully, "and we took quite a liking to him. But, somehow, a man that turns traitor to his friends loses caste with me."

"That's a natural feeling," said Inspector Burton, tolerantly. "But in this case, there are extenuating circumstances. It's too long to explain now. At any rate, I'll be able to make it light for Murphy."

"Well, tell-tale or not, I'm glad of that," said Bob. "He did us a good turn when we were captives aboard the trawler."

Inspector Burton then proceeded to explain that, after landing from the Sub Chaser on the north shore of Santa Cruz the previous night, he had led his party through the mountains. After striking the headwaters of the creek, they followed down the

canyon until entering the valley where the stockade was located.

This they had inspected. Finding it untenanted, they had proceeded on down the canyon. When still some distance from the landing, they had encountered "Black George" and his men in superior numbers, and had fallen back in the stockade.

"That was when we first heard your shots. Then they grew more distant as you retreated," said Bob.

The Secret Service man nodded.

Ensign Warwick and his party, he continued, had been ambushed as they pushed up the canyon, but had cut their way through and taken refuge in the stockade.

"Knowing the Sub Chaser was guarded and would wait for us, we determined to wait for daylight before attacking the smugglers," continued Inspector Burton. "We were at a disadvantage through unfamiliarity with our surroundings. Fortunate for all concerned, you boys were on the job. Otherwise we in the stockade would not have known that the major portion of the attacking party had gone to the landing, and it might have gone hard with Robbins and his handful of sailors."

"I suppose, Inspector, that the breaking up of this gang of coolie smugglers is a matter of some importance," suggested Mr. Temple.

"Some importance, indeed," Inspector Burton said.

He was silent a little while, gazing out of the window at the palm trees on the lawn and the bright sunshine flooding all.

"A great feather in my cap, and sure to bring me advancement," he said, smiling. "The credit really belongs to you, boys, but matters of that sort are not recognized in official circles. I, as the man on the ground, will be the one rewarded."

"And quite rightly, too," said Mr. Temple, warmly. The genial Secret Service man had commended himself by his actions. "I am sure," he added, "that these boys feel anything they were able to do was owing to the accidents of fortune."

"Yes, indeed," said Jack.

And Frank chimed in:

"We were in great luck, sir, to be permitted to have a hand in the ending of the adventure."

Bob nodded.

"Very good of you, boys, to take it like that," approved Inspector Burton. "But, remember, I have no illusions about the matter. I know of what help you have been.

"At any rate," he continued, "the capture of this gang is of the greatest importance. Smuggling of Chinese coolies into the country has been growing

alarmingly. Who would have thought the smugglers would be so bold as to operate a distributing point on Santa Cruz Island? Yet, after all, what better place could they have found? Isolated, practically uninhabited, it was admirably suited to their purpose.

"This man Folwell is a smooth crook with a tremendous reputation for elusiveness. We have never been able to obtain definite information connecting him with criminal activities. He is the head of a gang that has its ramifications not only up and down the Pacific but in the east, too, in New York.

"Through your instrumentality, we have him by the heels now, and not only him but his agents in our own official circles as well as old Wong Ho."

"What," interrupted Jack, "you have arrested that old Chinaman? Why, we had no idea where it was in Chinatown that we had been taken."

"I know," said Inspector Burton, "but from Matt Murphy I obtained information that I wired at once to San Francisco, and Wong Ho is in the toils. From Murphy, too, I obtained the names not only of Handby, but of several others in official positions, who have been spies for Folwell. They, too, are being watched and either under arrest already or soon will be. You see," smiling, "I have had a busy morning."

"And the other boats employed in the coolie traffic?"

"Ensign Warwick is attending to that matter. They will be rounded up."

"A good piece of work," approved Mr. Temple, breaking the silence which followed the Secret Service man's last remark. "And now, boys, we'll go back to San Francisco for a day or two while I conclude the business matters which brought me west. Then we'll return to New Mexico where I will leave you at the Hampton's for the two or three weeks left of your vacation, while I return to New York."

Inspector Burton leaned forward, and cleared his throat.

"Mr. Temple, I have a proposition to make to you," he said.

The older man regarded him with surprise.

"Yes? What is it?"

"Just this," said the Secret Service chief. "These boys have been of such service to the country that I want them to have some reward."

"Oh, we're not looking for anything," said Frank quickly.

Inspector Burton smiled tolerantly.

"My dear boy, I know very well you aren't. But what I am about to propose may please you, after

all. Have you ever been to Washington, the national capital?"

"No, sir. None of us have."

"Well, wouldn't you like to shake hands with the President? And wouldn't it be nice to have the Chief of the Secret Service thank you personally for what help you have done?"

The eyes of all three chums shone. The unexpected proposal left them speechless. Mr. Temple spoke for them.

"That would be fine, Inspector," he said. "You've knocked the wind out of the boys. They'll tell you what they think of your plan as soon as they recover."

"Boy, oh, boy, I guess that wouldn't be scrumptious," said Jack.

"Something more to tell the fellows at Harrington Hall when school reopens," said Frank.

"I'm ready right now," said big Bob, melodramatically leaping to his feet and grabbing the doorknob. "Come on. Let's go."

Mr. Temple laughed, and Inspector Burton joined him.

"Not so fast," he said. "When you leave New Mexico for home, you can go by way of Washington. That will be time enough. In fact, I'll have to precede you to arrange matters."

After some discussion, the chums went out to wander around Santa Barbara, leaving Mr. Temple and the Secret Service man to make the necessary arrangements as to time, etc., for their proposed trip to Washington.

"Come on. Let's go down to the beach for a plunge," said Bob. "That's the only way I can get this exuberance out of my system."

CHAPTER XXIX

A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE

JACK, Frank and Bob reached Washington alone, Mr. Temple, weeks before, having left them in New Mexico to return to New York.

"You fellows have given me the longest and most exciting vacation from business that I ever had," he said, on leaving them at the Hampton ranch. "Little did I think I would be involved in international intrigue on the border or engaged in breaking up a tremendous smuggling ring. But I'm too old for all this excitement, although you youngsters seem to flourish on it."

"Old," protested Bob. "Why, Dad, you look fitter after all our experiences than for years."

Mr. Temple's eyes twinkled.

"Well," said he, "I can't say that I haven't enjoyed it all. Quite a change from business, hey?" he added, appealing to Mr. Hampton, Jack's father, the mining engineer.

Mr. Hampton nodded, smiling slightly. He himself led a life filled with more adventure and excitement than that of the quieter business man. Yet he, too, had had a considerable increase in thrills that summer, kidnapped in an airplane and held captive by Mexican rebels at the Calomares palace in the mountains of Sonora, as related in a previous tale of *The Radio Boys on the Mexican Border.*

Life at the ranch had gone along quietly for the boys during the two weeks after Mr. Temple's departure, filled with riding, several short trips into the mountains and a visit to Santa Fe, second oldest city in America, to inspect the ruins of the Spanish occupation.

Then had come the expected invitation from Inspector Burton of the Secret Service to visit Washington, and with two weeks left of their vacation, all three set out for New York via the national capital.

Now, as they stood in front of the New Willard at Fourteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, just around the corner from the White House, they were filled with pleasurable excitement and some nervousness, too. For they were going to meet the President of the United States.

"Be at the office of the President's Secretary at

eleven o'clock," had read the note from Inspector Burton, awaiting them at the hotel. He had written he would be unable by reason of business engagements to meet them at the hotel and conduct them to the White House, but that he would meet them there.

It was a hot August day. Not a cloud was in the sky, and the sun shone with an intensity that was almost unbearable. Heat waves danced on the asphalt, and there were few people moving about. Washington in mid-summer is at its deadest, for then the legislators and major government officials have fled to seashore or mountain, the city is depopulated, and those remaining stir abroad no more than necessary. In its ring of hills, drowsy, somnolent, the governing center of the nation takes a summer *siesta* and waits for the coming of crisper autumn when the wheels once more will begin to revolve.

For the President to be at the White House was unusual, but urgent business having to do with a crisis in a little-known corner of Latin America had demanded his presence. The boys had read of his return the day previous in their morning paper.

Being a little ahead of the appointed time they walked leisurely along Pennsylvania Avenue under

the dusty trees, with the broad White House lawn showing green and pleasant behind the high iron fence, and with the White House handsome and dignified through the trees. Following directions, they did not turn in at the wide main gateway, but at Fifteenth Street turned and retraced their steps to the small thoroughfare between the State, Army and Navy Building and the left wing of the White House, where the executive offices are located.

Down this thoroughfare to the left they went, nervousness increasing, turned in at a gateway and entered the anteroom of the President's secretary. It was cool and quiet in there, and empty of its usual crowd of men and women clamoring to see the President on some business or other. Inspector Burton rose from a corner, and came forward hand extended, and at his smile and reassuring handclasp the knees of the chums ceased to be water and became a bit more solid once more.

After being introduced to the President's secretary they were taken to the Blue Room, instead of the President's office, and there, amid the summer dust cloths covering the furniture, in that room where the presidents of the past had conferred upon matters that shook the world, the President greeted them. Tall, elegant, elderly, gray, with a smile and a homely manner of talking which put them at ease

at once in some magical way, he made a profound impression on the boys.

"Such boys as you," said he, in parting, "renew my faith in the future of America."

Then they were out, and walking along Pennsylvania Avenue with Inspector Burton, a bit dazed, sure that great distinction had been visited on them, but not yet able to understand it all.

At Fifteenth Street, where they had turned back on their previous stroll along the fenced White House lawn, the Secret Service man took them into the imposing pile of the Treasury Building.

"The Chief wants to thank you," was the only explanation he vouchsafed.

First the President! Now the head of the Secret Service! Things were coming fast. Jack and Bob looked solemn, but Frank the irrepressible, catching sight of their long faces, burst into laughter.

"Brace up, my hearties," he cried, thwacking each on the back. "He's not going to eat you. I have private information that assures me he won't."

The tension was relieved, as all laughed.

Then Inspector Burton conducted the chums into a high-ceilinged office lined with books, looking more like a student's library than the office of the head of

the nation's great super-police force. A small man, compactly built, with a close-clipped gray mustache, rose from a desk and advanced to meet them.

"Well, well, so these are the young heroes," he said, grasping each in turn firmly by the hand as the introductions were managed.

Then he stood back and took a long look at them, a twinkle in his eye at the mounting color and embarrassed manner of the trio.

"I'd hate to meet any one of you in a rough-and-tumble fight," he said. "No wonder you made things fly on the Pacific."

All sat down then and a general conversation about the break-up of the smugglers' ring followed. The boys learned that "Black George" and Wong Ho were in jail, awaiting trial, that three boats employed in the smuggling traffic had been captured, that Mexico had been asked and had agreed to prosecute the conspirators operating at Ensenada, that three employees of the government were under arrest for conspiracy in the smuggling operations, and that Matt Murphy was free on parole and the case against him would not be pushed.

Finally, Inspector Burton arose and the boys took that as a signal it was time to depart, and also got to their feet.

"I know of no way to reward you except to give you the thanks of the Service," said the Chief at parting. "But that is yours. Good-by."

"Wow," said Frank, when they were alone at their hotel once more, "I feel as if I owned the world."

"The common herd had better not talk to me for a while," declared Bob, grinning. "I wouldn't be able to notice anybody less than a general."

"Same here," said Jack. "Well, now, fellows, what are we going to do? Now that we're on the ground with a fine chance to see the sights, we certainly aren't going to go right home, are we?"

"I move we stay until we take in everything," said Frank.

"Second the motion," said Bob. "But I tell you, going around in this heat is going to cost me some weight."

"Oh, it'll just get you in condition for football," said Jack. "You're getting too fat, anyhow."

That precipitated a general discussion of the forthcoming return to Harrington Hall Military Academy, the football prospects, the effect which recital of their thrilling summer would have on schoolmates, and other matters of similar ilk. It would be Jack's last year, while Frank and Bob, a

class behind him, would have two years more before entering college. All three planned to enter Yale, of which both Mr. Hampton and Mr. Temple were graduates.

Three days they spent in sightseeing, paying visits to Mount Vernon, George Washington's old home; the national cemetery at Arlington, quaint Annapolis, where the Naval College is located, and inspecting the capital and all the great public buildings.

Browned, looking taller and broader, every one, than at the beginning of summer, they arrived home at length a week before the opening of school, and spent the interim mainly in swimming and in re-assembling the airplane owned by Frank and Bob, which had been shipped on from New Mexico, or in working at Jack's radio plant.

Frank, as stated in a previous tale, was an orphan and lived with the Temples, Bob's father being his guardian. Jack, whose mother was dead and whose father still was in New Mexico, decided to make his home at the Temples instead of opening his own home. The Hampton and Temple estates, situated on the far end of Long Island, adjoined each other.

And here, with their preparations for school, we shall leave our three friends. But—here's a little

secret—the following summer a mysterious airplane, a sandy and secluded cove and what they found there, strange lights at sea at night and the imprints of a one-legged man's wooden peg on the sand of a deserted stretch of beach, all combined to draw the three chums into adventures as exciting and thrilling as any that had gone before. And these will be related in *The Radio Boys With the Revenue Guard.*

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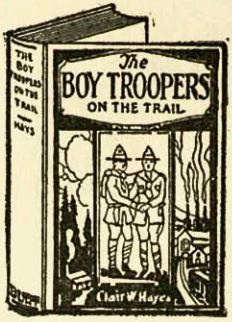

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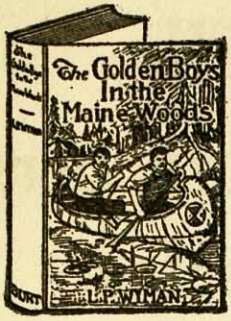

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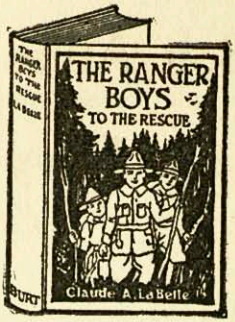

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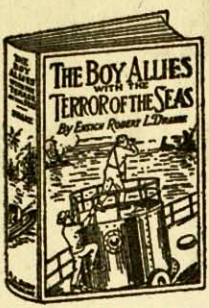

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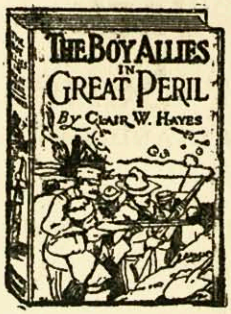

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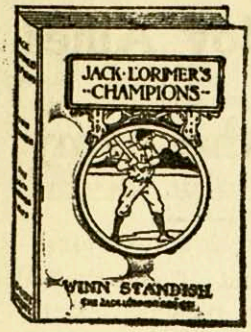

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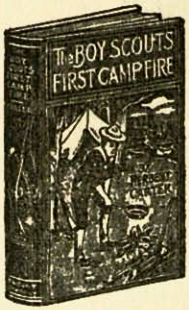

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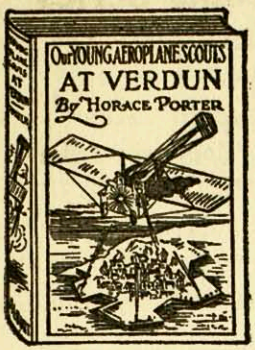

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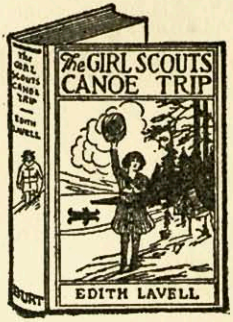

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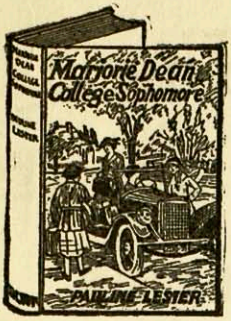

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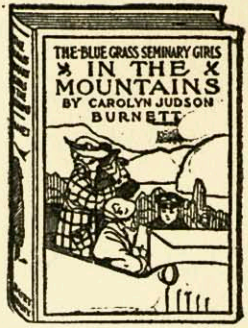

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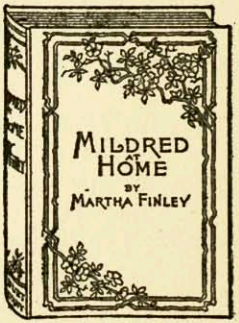

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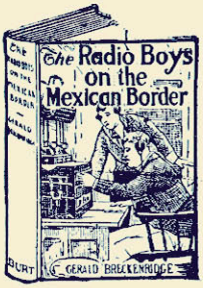

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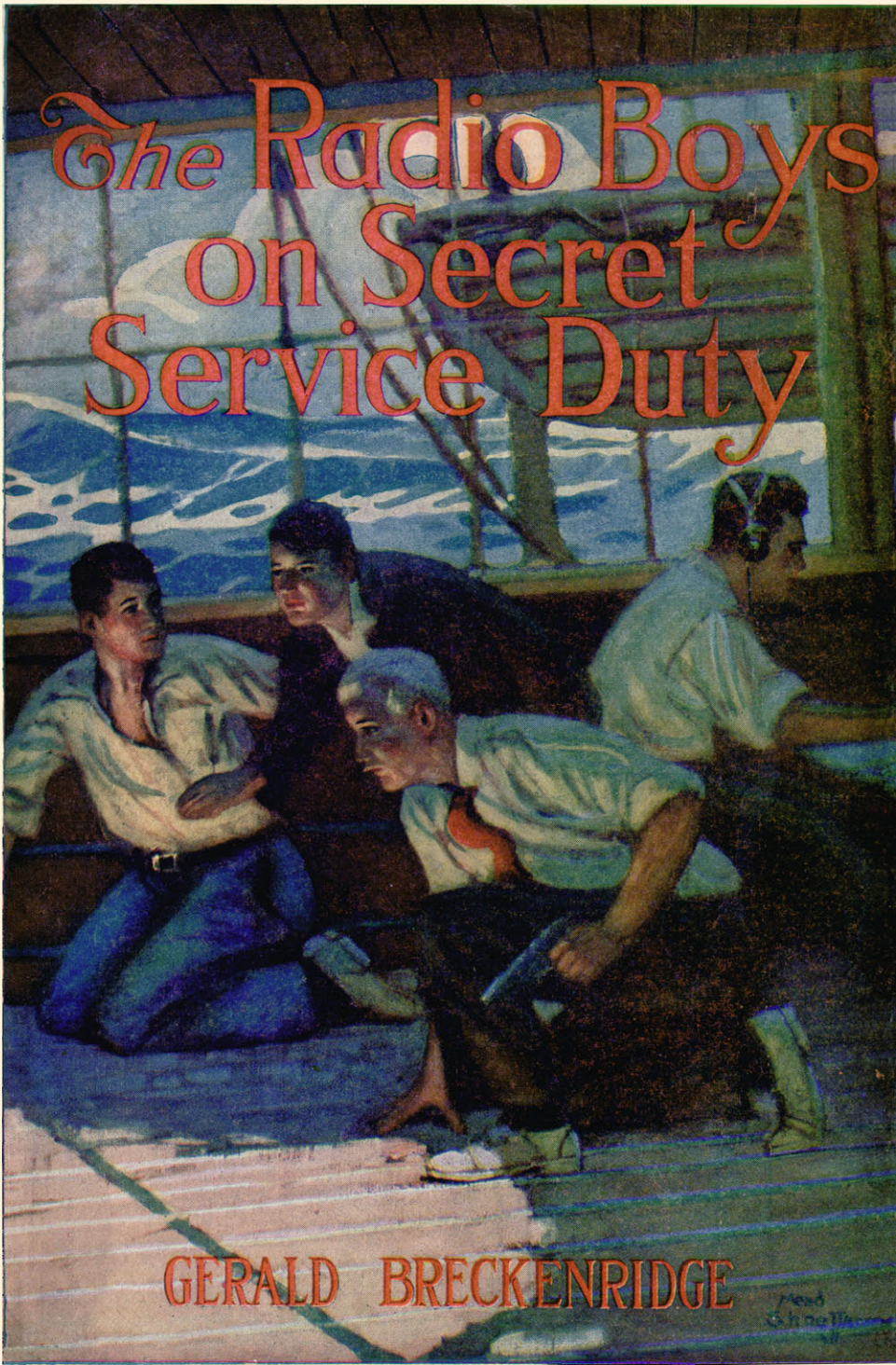

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